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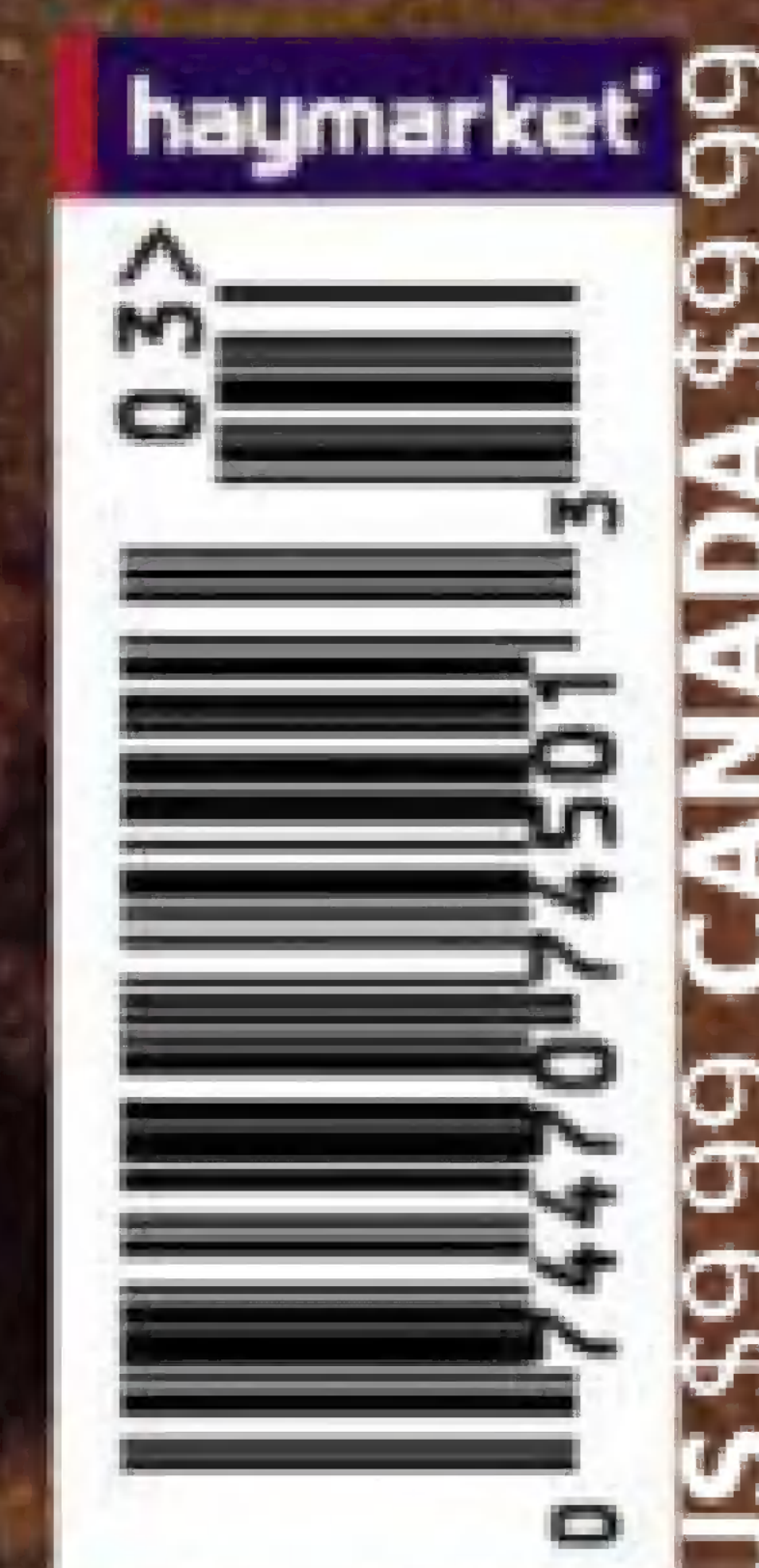
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ISABELLE FAUST PLAYS BERG AND BEETHOVEN

The violinist on her new
disc, reviewed this issue



VILLA-LOBOS: BACH MEETS BRAZIL

Which version of the colourful
Bachianas Brasileiras to own?

February highlights

from EMI and Virgin Classics



Spotlight release



Bach: Concertos

Xuefei Yang

The Beijing-born UK-based guitarist, whose international career finds her performing at the world's most prestigious concert halls, has recorded an all-Bach programme anchored by three concertos newly arranged for guitar and string quartet. Xuefei performs her own transcriptions of the *Violin Concertos* BWV 1041 and 1042 and the *Harpsichord Concerto* BWV 1052 with the extraordinary Elias String Quartet. The concertos are complemented by arrangements for solo guitar of the *Violin Sonata* BWV 1001, the *Prelude in C Major* BWV 846 and the *Air on a G string*.

"A dazzling array of colours [...] complements her fastidious yet exuberant interpretations."

Gramophone

Also new this month



Debussy: Clair de lune

Natalie Dessay

Soprano Natalie Dessay and pianist Philippe Cassard perform early songs, including several rarities, by Claude Debussy, whose 150th birthday is commemorated in 2012. The artists appear in recital at the Wigmore Hall in March.



Beethoven: Piano Sonatas Vols. I & II

HJ Lim

The brilliant 24-year-old Korean pianist's first project for EMI Classics is an ambitious traversal of the Complete Beethoven Piano Sonatas over eight themed CDs. The first of four 2-CD sets by an artist of great intelligence and vision.



The Red Piano

Yundi

For his first non-Chopin recording, Yundi turns to repertoire from his native China, anchored by the Yellow River Piano Concerto. The programme also features arrangements for solo piano of traditional classical Chinese songs.



Une fête Baroque

Emmanuelle Haïm

The 10th anniversary concert by Le Concert d'Astrée under its founder/conductor Emmanuelle Haïm. 23 distinguished singers of Baroque repertoire, including Natalie Dessay and Philippe Jaroussky perform works by Handel, Purcell and Lully.



ICON series

Four new titles from the ICON series pay homage to some of the greatest recording artists with elegantly packaged multi-CD sets. This month's releases are devoted to Alexis Weissenberg, Bruno Walter, Elly Ameling and Guido Cantelli.



EMI Masters

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Sounds of America

Gramophone's guide to the classical scene in the US and Canada



Focus Bang on a Can - page I » **The Scene** Musical highlights - page IV » **Recording reviews** - page IX

PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER SERLING



Bang on a Can founders (from left) David Lang, Michael Gordon and Julia Wolfe

CRAZY FOR NEW

Going strong for a quarter of a century and having a huge following hasn't affected Bang on a Can's freethinking approach to making and disseminating new music, as Vivien Schweitzer discovers

'There is something about the marker that makes you stop and look back at your beginnings,' says the composer Julia Wolfe, referring to the 25th anniversary – this season – of Bang on a Can, the new music collective that she and two colleagues inaugurated with a one-day musical marathon in 1987. From underground beginnings, it has grown into a prominent organisation with its own ensembles, recordings and regular concerts at major venues.

'We didn't really have an itinerary and we weren't thinking about starting an institution,' added Wolfe. 'But we haven't lost our craziness and enthusiasm for doing interesting new works.' She and fellow composers David Lang and Michael Gordon decided to organise the first Bang on a Can marathon – now an annual event featuring an eclectic array of performers and works that meshes classical, jazz, pop, rock, indie and world music elements – out of frustration with the then-divisive aesthetics that pigeonholed composers into 'uptown' or 'downtown' niches and categories such as 'symphonists', 'minimalists' or 'academics'. The trio wanted to cross boundaries and create a space for music that wasn't easily categorised.

The inaugural event featured established composers such as Steve Reich, John Cage and Milton Babbitt as well as a host of young, unknown composers of an eclectic bent. Over the years Bang on a Can has thrived and expanded, with marathons staged in neighbourhoods all over New York as well as in Philadelphia, London, Amsterdam and Hamburg. The organisers aim for a balance between styles – so a marathon might feature a string quartet playing Xenakis, a chamber ensemble playing Reich, a choir singing contemporary classical music, a jazz band, folksongs from Kyrgyzstan, a rock guitarist and a gamelan ensemble. The events usually only feature works by living composers, but exceptions are made.

Some of Bang on a Can's repertory is commissioned through its People's Commissioning Fund, to which fans of contemporary music donate money so the group can continue to generate a healthy number of new pieces each year.

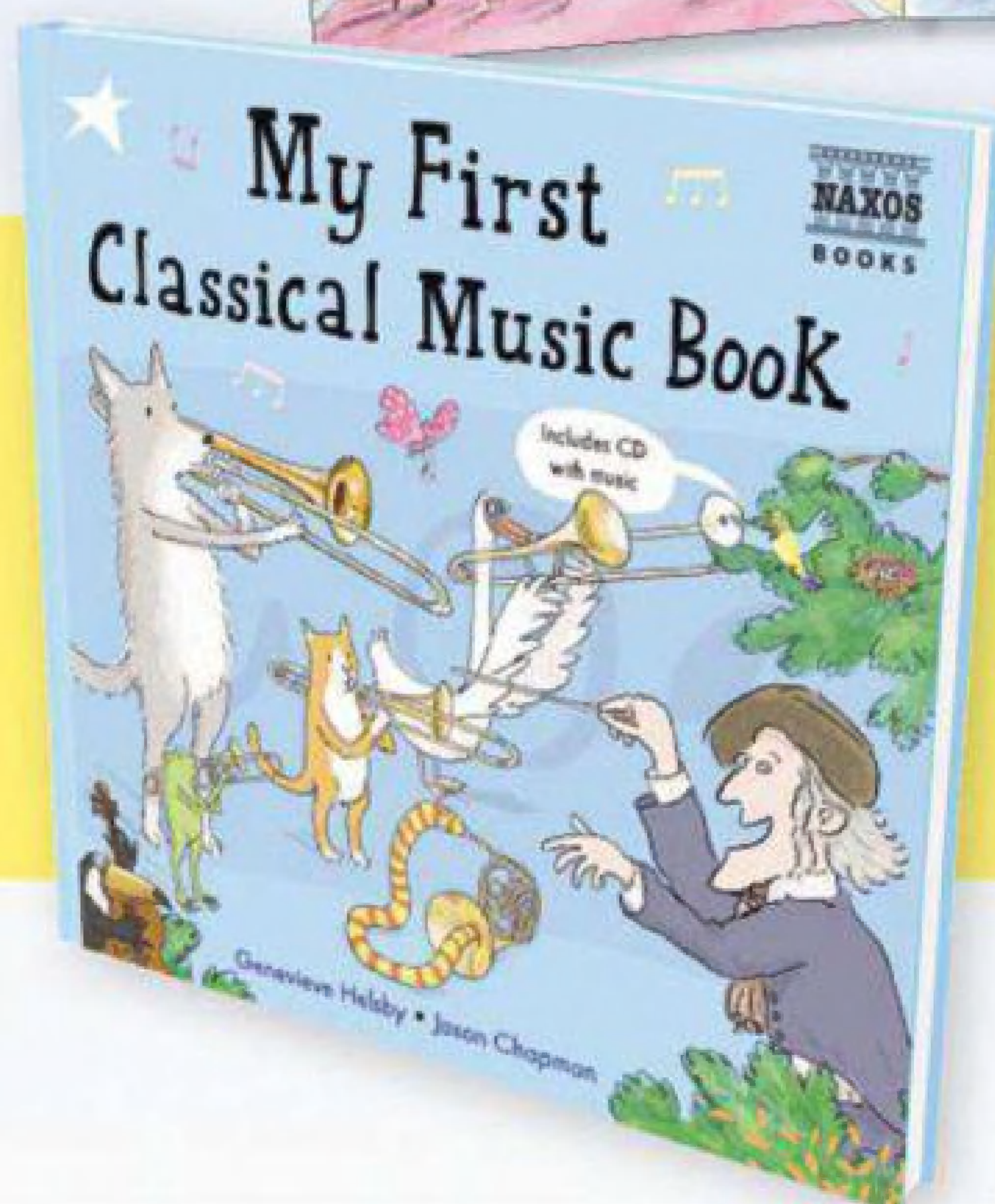
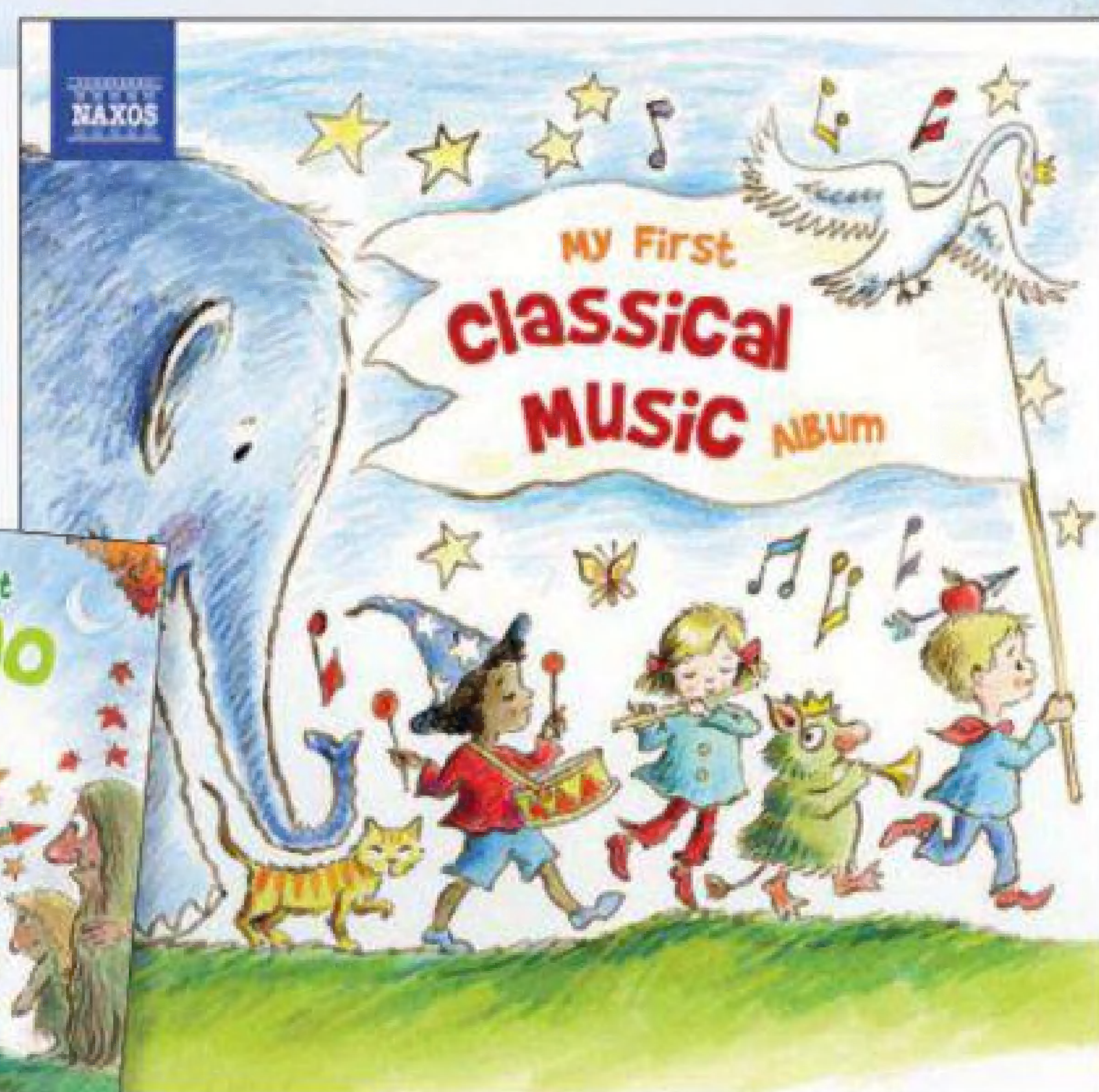
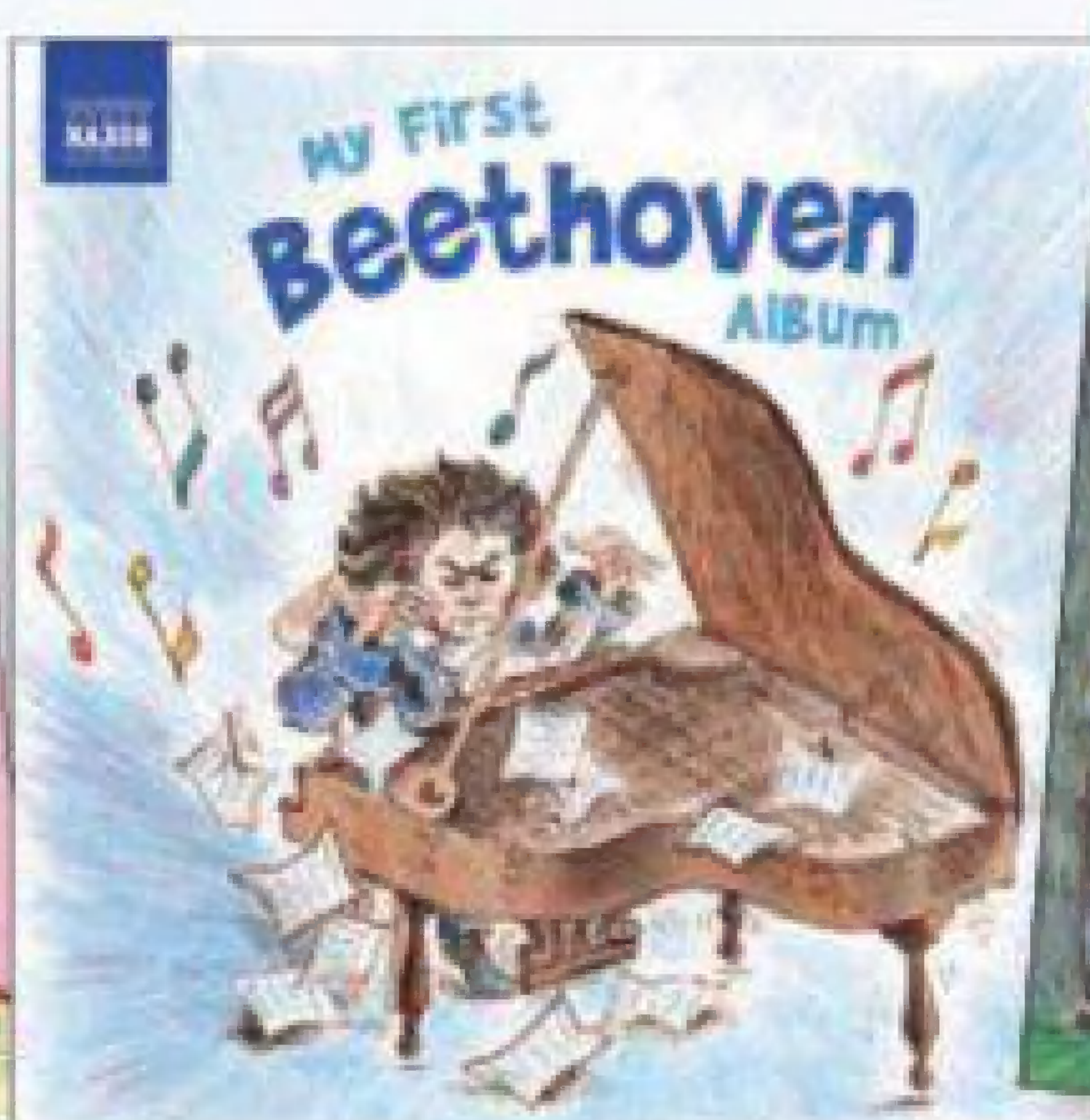
Bang on a Can has always had a strong connection to music of other cultures, and this link has increased in strength over the past 25 years. The organisation's eclectic, porous ethos has had a major impact on the younger generation, especially those who have participated in the Summer Music Festival at MASS MoCA (the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art), a professional development programme for young composers and performers of an experimental bent.

Lang is proud of the influence his organisation has had in opening doors for up-and-coming classically trained musicians, who are increasingly entrepreneurial and adventurous about both the types of music they play and where they can play it. 'They take it



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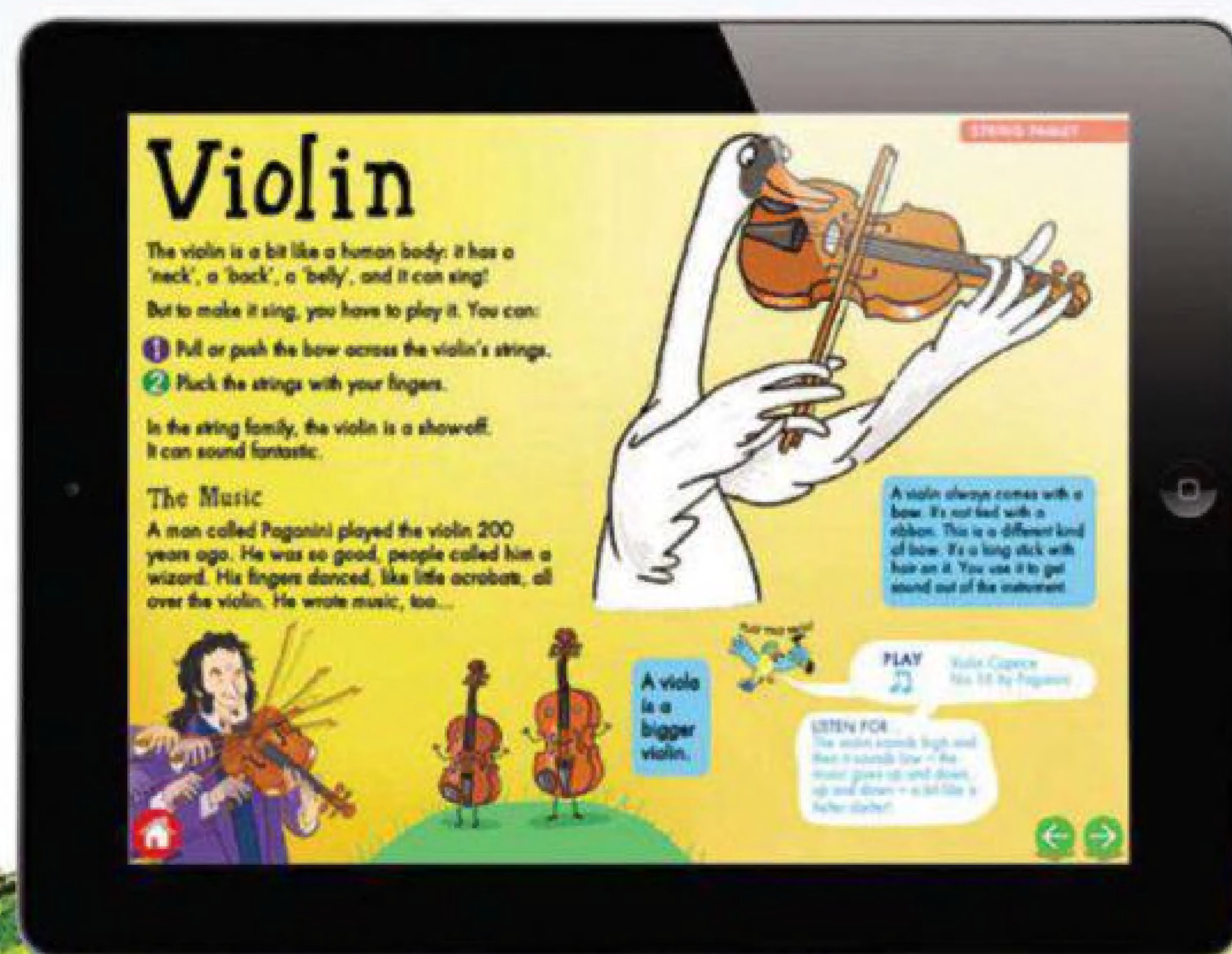
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for granted that they can play in clubs and collaborate with a rock band. There are all these people who have bigger horizons than we did,' Lang explains. 'Our teachers were so demoralised by how small, insular, Eurocentric and university-based their world was. I'm really proud of the fact that there are these young composers who never had that feeling. They never thought: "I'm not going to be able to get my music out."'

Asphalt Orchestra, the brainchild of Bang on a Can, is a vibrant example of the organisation's creativity in promoting imaginative new ensembles. The avant-garde 12-piece marching band (comprising classically trained musicians) avoids typical brass-band fare in favour of funky arrangements and inventive new pieces. During a recent performance at Lincoln Center, a large crowd was in tow as the band paraded through the outdoor plazas playing works by Frank Zappa and Yoko Ono – an ideal way to attract different audiences, another major goal of Bang on a Can.

The cellist Ashley Bathgate, a Bang on a Can protégée and a member of the ensemble Bang on a Can All-Stars, agrees that the organisation's

'We're still an alternative, a niche – and that gives us a huge fire, a lot of passion about where there's left to go'

ethos has had a huge influence on her generation. For Bathgate – who graduated in 2007 with a master's from the Yale University School of Music (where she 'wasn't yet a new music junkie') – playing for Bang on a Can changed her whole outlook on music: 'I was playing only standard classical music in school, and when I started to play these pieces by Wolfe and others my sound world opened up. Playing the cello became about other things than playing in tune and playing beautifully. I have been challenged to do things such as improvise.'

'It's alluring,' she adds, 'because you get to be a different animal for a day and try on all these different costumes and sounds and do things that classical music, even 20th-century music, doesn't ask you to do.'

The All-Stars – whose members also include Robert Black (double bass), Vicky Chow (piano), David Cossin (percussion), Mark Stewart (electric guitar) and Evan Ziporyn (clarinets) – are part-rock band, part-classical chamber ensemble and part-jazz sextet, an acoustic and electronic group that freely crosses musical boundaries. They have become important ambassadors for contemporary music and celebrate their 20th anniversary this year. 'Big Beautiful Dark and Scary', their new two-CD set on the Cantaloupe Music label, features premiere recordings of works by both established and younger composers including Louis Andriessen, Evan Ziporyn, David Longstreth, Kate Moore, Lang, Gordon and Wolfe, plus Ziporyn's arrangement of Nancarrow's *Four Player Piano Studies*.

In addition to 'Big Beautiful Dark and Scary', the Bang on a Can 25th-anniversary celebrations include 'Field Recordings' – an evening-length project which premieres in March at the Barbican, London, followed by a performance in April at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall. Each of the composers involved – indie pop musicians Tyondai Braxton and Nick Zammuto, electronica artist Mira Calix, visual artist and composer Christian Marclay; as well as Ziporyn, Gordon, Lang and Wolfe – will incorporate into the project 'found sounds' that have a special resonance for them.

'We thought of coalescing around memory,' explains Lang, describing the genesis of the project. 'We wanted to find recordings, speech, sounds and things that have existed in the past, and remember them.' The result, he says, will be 'a kind of ghost story'. The project

will also feature improvisatory elements, projections, film and archival audio and video.

Despite their high-profile concerts at major venues and their significant influence on the classical music scene in general and young musicians in particular, Bang on a Can's founders still feel that the organisation is anti-establishment.

'We look like an establishment because we've managed to stick around this long, have built these projects, are well managed and get thousands of people to attend our concerts,' explains Lang. 'But we will never be pop, or the New York Philharmonic with a subscription series. We're still an alternative, a niche – and that gives us a huge fire, a lot of passion about where there's left to go.'

'It's true that we're an institution now,' he adds, 'and people are growing up with us, but the model is a better way for living your life. It's easy to be optimistic when you think you have the power to do it yourself. The responsibility is on you to build the world you want to live in. That's empowering. We were led to believe that there are mysterious mechanisms that control you. That's one reason that Bang on a Can exists.'

Lang, who teaches at Yale, enjoys seeing how young composers support and encourage each other; at his students' concerts he notices a congenial atmosphere that was lacking during his own formative years.

According to Wolfe – who calls Bang on a Can a 'mom-and-pop shop', albeit one that now has a great support staff – the organisation was part of a wave of openness. People sometimes tell her that a work sounds like 'a Bang on a Can type of piece' and she wonders what that means. 'We have different voices and aesthetics, and it's more about the openness than a particular style,' she says.

After a quarter-century, Bang on a Can continues to embrace that openness. The organisation may have establishment credentials such as prominent ensembles, festivals and recordings, but it still manages to embody a freethinking state of mind that hasn't been tamed by success. 6

RECOMMENDED BANG ON A CAN RECORDINGS



'Big Beautiful Dark and Scary'

Bang on a Can All-Stars

Cantaloupe Music CA21074

Bang on a Can's 25th-anniversary release.

with their trademark mix of uncategorisable new music.



Terry Riley - 'In C'

Maya Beiser *vc* David Cossin *perc* Steve Gilewski

bass Scott Kuney *mnd* Wu Man *pipa*, et al

Cantaloupe Music CA21004

Riley's 1960s minimalist masterpiece is propelled into the future in this reinterpretation featuring an explosive combination of instruments from around the globe.



Brian Eno - 'Music for Airports (Live)'

Bang on a Can All-Stars

Cantaloupe Music CA21045

The All-Stars' version of Eno's 'ambient' album, featuring live musicians. They stayed close to the source by sharing the developing project with Eno himself.

LIVE EVENTS

March 20, Barbican Centre, London

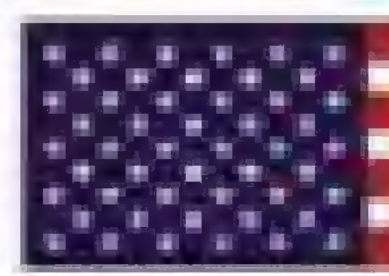
Bang on a Can All-Stars perform the world premiere of multimedia project 'Field Recordings', which involves several composers.

barbican.org.uk

April 28, Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York

US premiere of 'Field Recordings' by Bang on a Can All-Stars. The concert also features Asphalt Orchestra and Gamelan Galak Tika.

lincolncenter.org



THE SCENE

Countertenor Iestyn Davies stars in *Rinaldo* at Chicago's Lyric Opera; Reich, Glass and Golijov unite at Portland's March Music Moderne; American Mavericks festival returns to San Francisco



Femme fatale: Anna Netrebko stars in Laurent Pelly's production of *Manon* at the Met, New York

WASHINGTON, DC

Washington National Opera

Così fan tutte (February 25 - March 15)

Jonathan Miller's vision of Mozart and Da Ponte's Enlightenment comedy unpacks its modern-dress bags at the Kennedy Center, replete with leather jackets, news crews and Banana Republic's spring line. Despite a cavalcade of *Così*s in the States this season there is some capital vocal power in DC not to be missed, chiefly in Elizabeth Futral's Fiordiligi, Christine Brandes's Despina and Teddy Tahu Rhodes's Guglielmo. Croatian mezzo Renata Pokupic makes a rare US appearance as Dorabella, tenor Joel Prieto is Ferrando and British baritone William Shimell sings Don Alfonso. Philippe Auguin conducts.

kennedy-center.org

LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles Opera

Albert Herring (February 25 - March 17)

LA Opera music director James Conlon continues his celebration of Benjamin Britten, which started last season with *The Turn of the Screw*, as a prelude to the composer's centenary in 2013. Alek Shrader makes his

company debut in the title-role, joined by Daniela Mack as Nancy, Ronnita Nicole Miller as Florence Pike and Jane Bunnell as Mrs Herring. Janis Kelly and Christine Brewer trade off as Lady Billows, and worth looking out for is the impressive young baritone Liam Bonner in the role of Sid. The production, directed by Paul Curran, comes from Santa Fe Opera - in which Shrader also starred.

laopera.com

NEW YORK

Metropolitan Opera

Khovanshchina (February 27 - March 17)

L'elisir d'amore (March 5-31)

Manon (March 26 - April 23)

In 2010's new rendering of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, the rebellious peasants prevailed in the final, gloriously staged, crowd scene. Similar detractors are not so lucky in the same composer's *Khovanshchina*, which details a revolt against Peter the Great led by Prince Ivan Khovansky (here sung by Ukrainian bass Anatoli Kotscherga in his Met debut). The late German director August Everding's staging is filled by a titanium cast of Eastern Europeans, including Olga Borodina,

Ildar Abdrazakov (also seen this season at the Met as Henry VIII), Misha Didyk and George Gagnidze. Kirill Petrenko conducts.

Adding some comic relief to the Met this month is a revival of John Copley's *L'elisir d'amore*, featuring *bel canto* superstar Juan Diego Flórez as Nemorino, Diana Damrau as Adina, Mariusz Kwiecien as Belcore and Alessandro Corbelli as Dulcamara. Meanwhile, Anna Netrebko retains the Met's reigning diva crown as Massenet's titular femme fatale in a new *Manon* that places the action in a John Singer Sargent-esque belle époque at the hands of director Laurent Pelly. Netrebko is joined by tenor Piotr Beczala and baritone Paulo Szot, with principal guest conductor Fabio Luisi leading from the pit.

metopera.org

CHICAGO

Lyric Opera of Chicago

Rinaldo (February 29 - March 24)

Handel's magic-laden opera celebrated its 300th anniversary last year and comes to the windy city with a gold-standard cast. Red-hot baritone Luca Pisaroni plays King Argante (reprising his role from Glyndebourne), coupled



Classic combination: the Kronos Quartet perform Steve Reich at Portland's March Music Moderne

with Elza van den Heever's sorceress Armida, warring opposite Sonia Prina's General Goffredo and David Daniels's Rinaldo over Jerusalem. Baroque maestro and English Concert director Harry Bicket conducts a cast that also features countertenor Iestyn Davies – who was the first British countertenor to sing at the Met in its winter production of *Rodelinda* – as Eustazio and Julia Kleiter as Rinaldo's lover, Almirena.

lyricopera.org

CHICAGO

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Das Lied von der Erde (March 1-3)

There may be manifold Mahler in orchestras across the country this season (see Montreal's entry), but few concerts are as tantalising as those helmed by Pierre Boulez, who has been on a recording spree of the composer's works for record label Deutsche Grammophon. Boulez returns to Chicago to cap off the CSO's season-long Mahler intensive, bringing with him *Das Lied von der Erde* sung by Michelle DeYoung and Stuart Skelton. Opening the programme is no less than Pierre-Laurent Aimard, a constant collaborator with Boulez, playing Schoenberg's Piano Concerto.

cso.org

NEW YORK

New York Philharmonic

The Modern Beethoven (March 1-20)

Alan Gilbert's leadership of the New York Philharmonic has included several in-depth festivals since he took the podium in 2009. The spring of 2010 brought in Valery Gergiev to explore the Russian Stravinsky, while 2011 featured a survey of Hungarian composers spanning Haydn, Bartók and Ligeti. This season, conductor David Zinman examines the modern, iconoclastic aspects of Beethoven. The month starts with a concert that bookends Stravinsky's *Capriccio* for piano and orchestra (featuring Peter Serkin) with Beethoven's Second and Seventh Symphonies, moving into the composer's Eighth and Fourth Symphonies broken up by Barber's Cello Concerto featuring Alisa Weilerstein. The festival concludes with Beethoven's Symphony No 1 and *Eroica* Symphony No 3, paired off with Gil Shaham performing Hartmann's *Concerto funèbre* for violin and orchestra.

nyphil.org



NEW YORK

Carnegie Hall

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (March 2-4)

Former New York Philharmonic music director Lorin Maazel weekends in his old stomping grounds just a few blocks south of his orchestral alma mater. For the occasion, he brings with him no less than the Vienna Philharmonic for a trio of pan-European pastries: March 2's programme ventures to Finland for Sibelius's First, Fifth and Seventh Symphonies. The following evening, Maazel pairs Mozart's Symphony No 40 with his own arrangement of music from Wagner's operatic marathon, dubbed *The Ring Without Words*. Finally, the orchestra turns to its own compatriots with waltzes of Johann Strauss and his son, plus Richard Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration* and *Der Rosenkavalier* Suite.

carnegiehall.org

PORTLAND

Various artists

March Music Moderne (March 5-31)

The Pacific Northwest continues to become a haven, much like New York, for genre-bending contemporary classical music that defies categorisation. It amps up that drive with the second annual March Music Moderne, a festival that, in its own words, listens 'to the here of the now' and features 31 concerts representing 12 countries and 51 composers including not only the likes of Golijov, Reich and Andriessen but also Beethoven, Hendrix and Stravinsky. Highlights are pianist Kirill Gerstein performing Oliver Knussen's *Ophelia's Last Dance* on March 18, and the Kronos Quartet making

a tour stop with Steve Reich's *WTC 9/11* and works by Laurie Anderson and Missy Mazzoli on March 21. Additionally, the East Coast Chamber Orchestra offers up a new work by Kenji Bunch on March 28, the Portland Opera showcases Philip Glass's *Galileo Galilei* on March 30 and the Oregon Symphony plays Shostakovich's Symphony No 5 on March 31. The festival closes out on the same day with *9 beet stretch*, an extension of Beethoven's Symphony No 9 designed to last 24 hours, starting at 11pm and coursing through April Fool's Day.

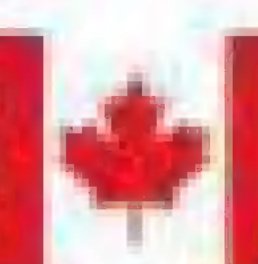
marchmusicmoderne.org

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco Symphony

American Mavericks (March 8-18)

In 2000, music director Michael Tilson Thomas paid homage to fresh and feisty voices in the United States' classical scene with American Mavericks, a much-ballyhooed festival that solidified the orchestra's commitment to works by living composers. For the orchestra's centennial celebrations, American Mavericks comes back with a vengeance, revisiting some of the composers it feted 12 years ago – Copland, Harrison, Ives and Varèse, for starters – and bringing in new blood with young composers such as Mason Bates. In addition to Bates's *Mass Transmission* and John Adams's *Absolute Jest*, performed in the festival's final weekend, this 10-day 'lollapalooza' will also contain a world premiere from Meredith Monk, Emanuel Ax performing Feldman's *Piano and Orchestra*, Jessye Norman singing selections from Cage's *Song books*, Jeremy Denk playing



Comic moment:
Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*
comes to San Diego



PHOTOGRAPHY: KEN HOWARD/SAN DIEGO OPERA

Cowell's Piano Concerto and Paul Jacobs taking the lead on Harrison's *Concerto for Organ with Percussion Orchestra*. All this happens under the baton of Tilson Thomas, who brings the festival on tour until March 30 with stopovers in Chicago, Ann Arbor and New York.

sfsymphony.org

SAN DIEGO

San Diego Opera

Don Pasquale (March 10-18)

It's not hard to imagine the cat-eyed Danielle de Niese as the vixen heroine of Donizetti's comic opera. She sings her first Norina in her home state of California opposite John Del Carlo, whose assumption of the title-role at the Metropolitan Opera was one of those rare moments of truly pitch-perfect casting. Rounding out the love triangle is Charles Castronovo as Ernesto and baritone Jeff Mattsey as Dr Malatesta. The all-American cast complements director David Gately's golden and Wild-West-set production, revived here after a successful 2002 premiere. Italian conductor Marco Guidarini lends an Italianate touch at the podium.

sdopera.com

DALLAS

The Dallas Opera

The Lighthouse (March 16-18)

When Keith Cerny first took the reins of The Dallas Opera, one of his stated goals was to find a way of making intimate works a staple of the company in spite of the grand space of the swanky new Winspear Opera House. The company's chamber opera series kicks off this month at the neighbouring Dallas Theater Center with *The Lighthouse* by Peter Maxwell Davies. The haunting mystery of the work will add a bit of *Turn of the Screw*-ish creepiness to the playhouse, while DTC's artistic director Kevin Moriarty takes his first stab at directing opera. Nicole Paiement conducts a cast comprised of Daniel Sumegi, Robert Orth and Andrew Bidlack.

dallasopera.org

MONTREAL

Metropolitan Orchestra

Symphonic Lyricism (March 18)

It's taken just over a decade, but Yannick Nézet-Séguin wraps up his Mahler symphony

cycle with his orchestra (they recorded the Fourth for ATMA Classique in 2004). They end with the *Adagio* from Mahler's unfinished Tenth Symphony, the final movement that the composer completed with full orchestration. The Montrealers pair this with the *Lyric Symphony* of Alexander von Zemlinsky, a disciple of Mahler who lost his would-be wife, Alma Schindler, to the symphonic titan. Performing Zemlinsky's seven lieder are baritone Brett Plegato and honey-voiced soprano – not to mention rising Met favourite – Angela Meade.

orchestremetropolitain.com

VANCOUVER

Vancouver Symphony Orchestra

Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg (March 24 & 26)

The term 'electrifying' has been used with no small frequency to describe Italian-born, US-residing Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, who famously rebounded from a career-threatening kitchen accident over 15 years ago and has continued to perform as one of the country's foremost violinists. She takes a break from her duties as New Century Chamber Orchestra director to zip up to Vancouver for Shostakovich's equally charged Violin Concerto No 1 under Andrew Litton. Fashioning a Russian evening, Litton also leads the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra in the Overture to Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* and Prokofiev's Symphony No 4.

vancouverSymphony.ca

DENVER

Opera Colorado

Florencia en el Amazonas (March 24 – April 1)

Thomas Wolfe may have believed that you can't go home again, but the late composer Daniel Catán believed otherwise with *Florencia en el Amazonas*, a portrait of a Brazilian opera diva returning to her native provenance to sing at the Manaus opera house and, hopefully, be reunited with her lover. Catán may have passed away last year, but his legacy lives on with this frequently performed work, here featuring soprano Pamela Armstrong as Florencia alongside Inna Dukach, Beth Clayton,

Keith Miller and Hector Vasquez. Ramón Tebar conducts Opera Colorado's first Spanish-language opera; Jose Maria Condemi directs. operacolorado.org

DETROIT

Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Järvi Returns (March 29 – April 1)

Maazel isn't the only conductor with a Wagnerian suite in town this month. Music director emeritus of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra Neeme Järvi rolls into the Motor City with Dutch percussionist, composer and arranger Henk de Vlieger's 'Orchestral Tribute' to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Also slated for the evening of master singers is a master pianist in Hélène Grimaud, who brings her synaesthete prowess to Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1. It's a work that Grimaud initially recorded for Erato in 1998 in an effort to divest herself of the traditional trappings and Impressionistic repertoire of a French pianist (suffice it to say, it worked).

detroitSymphony.com

BOSTON

Handel and Haydn Society

St Matthew Passion (March 30 – April 1)

The Handel and Haydn Society gave the US premiere of Bach's complete *St Matthew Passion* in 1879, and have yet to tire of the composer's setting of the eponymous saint's gospel. Founder of The Sixteen, Harry Christophers, makes one of his regular – and regularly anticipated – appearances with the H&H to conduct the oratorio. Among the soloists are leading British tenor Joshua Ellicott as the Evangelist, *Gramophone* Award-winning bass-baritone Matthew Brook as Christ, and a quartet comprising soprano Gillian Keith, alto Monica Groop, tenor Jeremy Budd and baritone Stephan Loges.

handelandhaydn.org

Previews by Olivia Giovetti

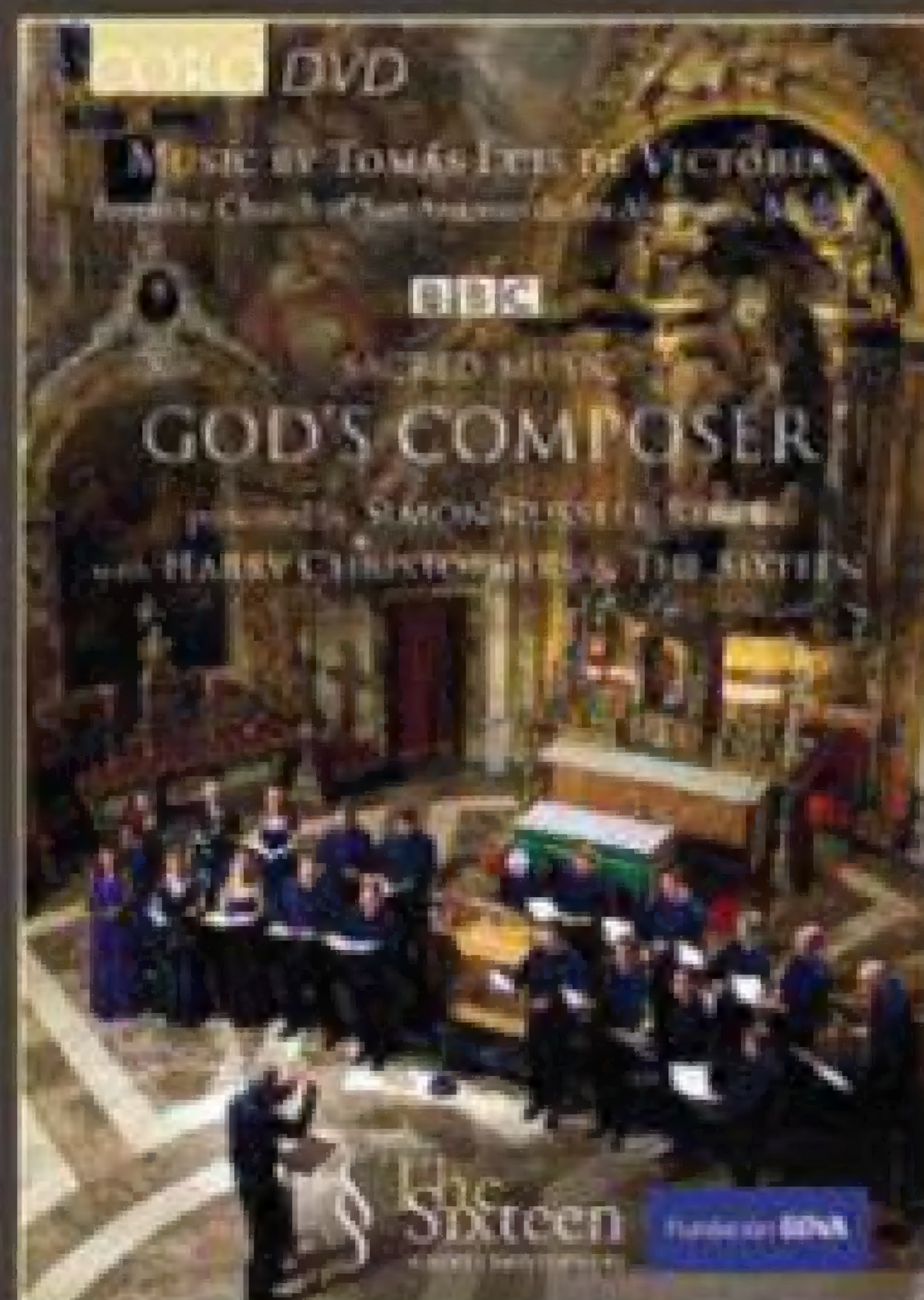
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Maurice RAVEL
SONATINE & MIROIRS
HANNES MINNAAR: PIANO

"Hannes is a musician with a great future ahead of him. He is intelligent, curious and passionate—a winning combination." — Marin Alsop: Conductor, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

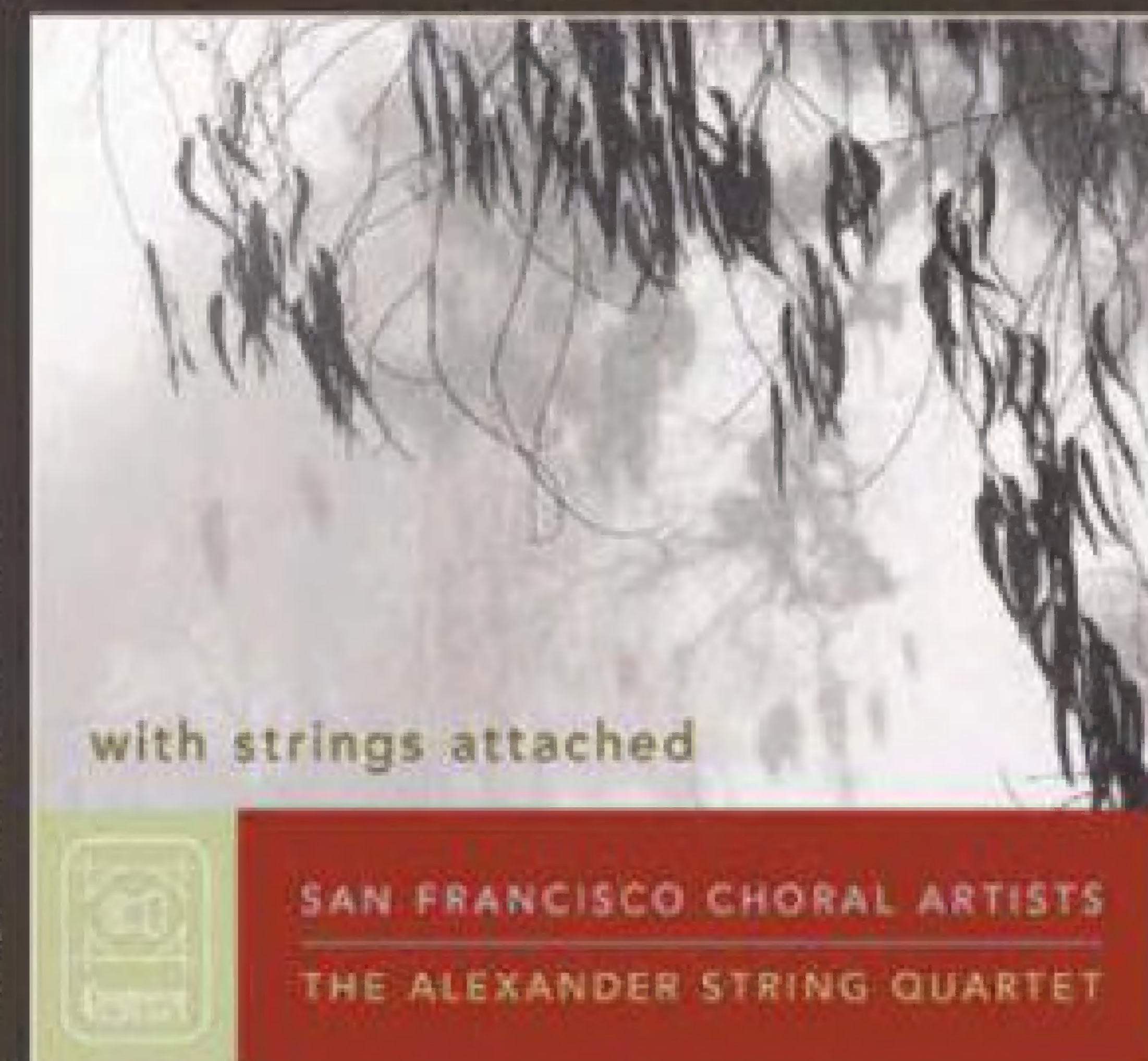
CORO 16100



Tomás Luis de VICTORIA
SACRED MUSIC: GOD'S COMPOSER
CHRISTOPHERS: CND/THE SIXTEEN

Broadcast on the BBC in December 2011, this special episode of the acclaimed *Sacred Music* series marks the 400th anniversary of the death of Spanish composer Tomás Luis de Victoria.

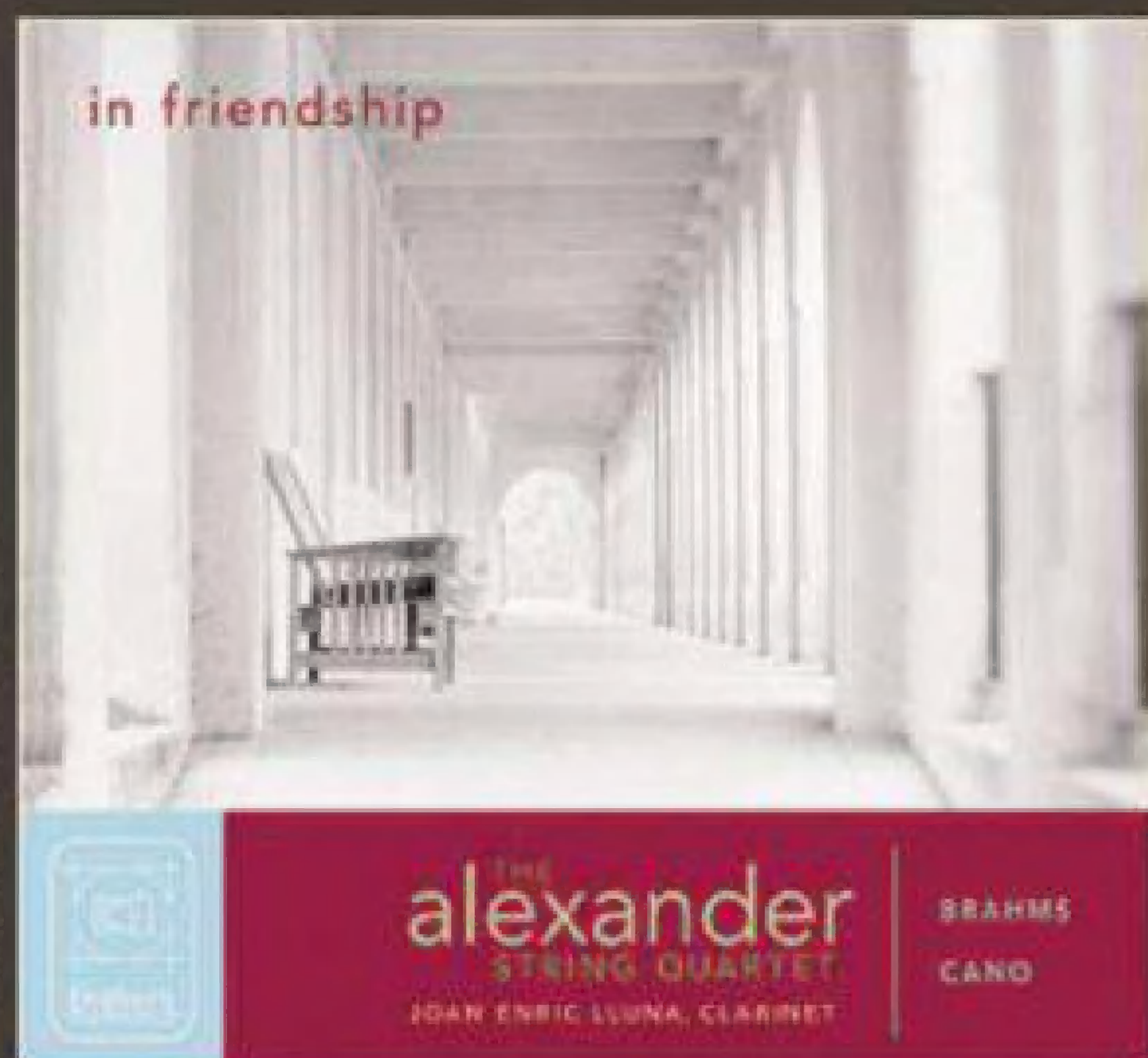
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Phaedra 92071



August DE BOECK
PIANO CONCERTO
JOZEF DE BEENHOUWER: PIANO/JANÁČEK PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA/VENKOV: CND

The suite from the opera *Francesca* finally rescues this accomplished musical drama by the late romantic Belgian composer August De Boeck from obscurity.

Challenge Classics 72530



Antonín DVOŘÁK & George GERSHWIN
VIOLIN CONCERTO & AN AMERICAN IN PARIS
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Ken Smith reviews concertos by David Chesky:
'If Vivaldi heard Chesky's concertos he might find them strange but would understand what was going on' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE IX**



Laurence Vittes reviews more Hanson from Seattle:
'Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony give the Technicolor demands of Hanson's Third just what they need' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE XI**

JS Bach

Suites for Solo Cello – No 2, BWV1008;
No 4, BWV1010; No 6, BWV1012

Sara Sant'Ambrogio *vc*

Sebastian Records © 246 (74' • DDD)



Tchaikovsky Medal winner in her second Bach Suites volume

Bach's six Cello Suites, like much Baroque music, provide so little information beyond the notes and a few markings that an interpreter must bring a world of expressive insight to these towering works. Not everyone can (or desires to) play the suites in the deeply philosophical style of Casals or via the limber approach that some early-music practitioners espouse.

On this new recording of the even-numbered suites, which completes her two-disc survey of the cycle (the first was reviewed 11/09), Sara Sant'Ambrogio makes a case for the pieces not as intimate monologues but as Bach in a bold, extrovert frame of mind. There's fire in virtually every phrase as she digs into the strings and breathes audibly, as if to underline total immersion in the mysteries and wonders that the suites hold.

The performances might be exhausting for the listener if they weren't shaped with such galvanising commitment. Sant'Ambrogio's sound is always penetrating and focused, her view of dynamics on the forceful side and her command of line firm, with just enough elasticity to give phrases the lift or space they need to take an organic place in the structural picture.

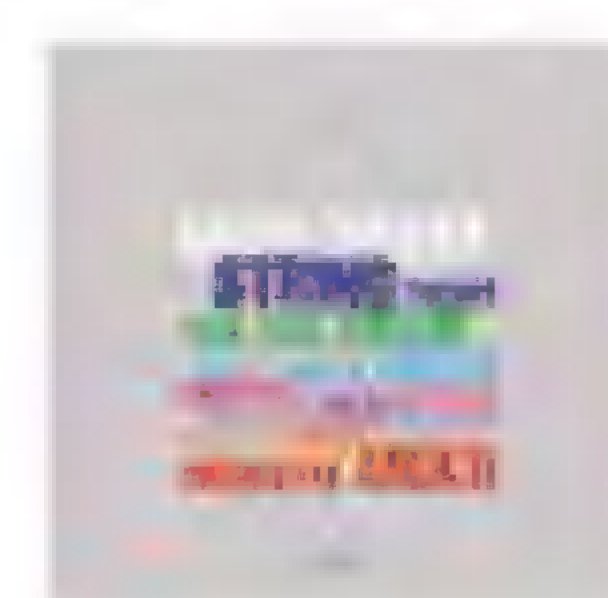
Sant'Ambrogio begins with one of the most challenging suites, No 4, in which she immediately introduces the potent declamation that pervades the disc's music-making. She plays the various dance movements in each suite with all repeats, tweaking them the second time around with brushes of ornamentation. Technically formidable and intensely communicative, the performances grab you by the ears and refuse to let go. **Donald Rosenberg**



Sara Sant'Ambrogio's quest for the right acoustic took her to West End Methodist Church, Nashville

Chesky

Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra^{ab}. Cello Concerto^b. Violin Concerto No 2^a. String Theory^a
^aTom Chiu *vn* ^bDave Eggar *vc* **Orchestra Area31**
Chesky © CD353 (56' • DDD)



Audiophile label turns the spotlight on its own creator

Sharp observers will notice a distinct similarity between the name of the composer on this recording and the record company involved. No one, though, would ever accuse the audiophile label Chesky Records and its founder David Chesky of conspiring in a mere vanity project. It is, rather, a splendid vanity project, in whose packaging alone – with credits and booklet-notes blurring into a design both cryptic yet intuitively coherent – one can see the mind of someone who never really breaks the rules but certainly bends them to his own will.

Although none of the three concertos here departs from the time-honoured form, the contents reflect a number of ideas culled from

other musical influences, particularly rock and jazz. Right from the opening Concerto for violin, cello and orchestra we're swept up by a sense of breathless propulsion. Chesky's rhythmic contrasts remain fairly conventional, but his sense of instrumental colour tends to peek into hidden corners. Borrowing much from rock music's 'noise' aesthetic, the music's timbral ornamentation often sounds as close to amplified distortion as you're likely to find on an acoustic instrument.

From jazz Chesky clearly retains a sense of improvisational immediacy, which violinist Tom Chiu and cellist Dave Eggar both deliver with a potent combination of close intensity and fluid grace. As fresh and vital as this music sounds, though, much of its underlying quality harks back to pre-Classical times. One gets the feeling that if Vivaldi somehow heard Chesky's concertos, he might find them the strangest pieces he'd ever heard – but he'd always understand what was going on.

Ken Smith

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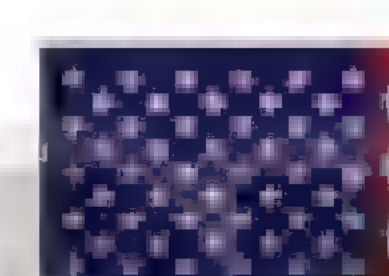
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T Dubois • Hahn • Schmitt

T Dubois Piano Quartet Hahn Piano Quartet

Schmitt Hasards, Op 96

Ames Piano Quartet

Sono Luminus © DSL92141 (73' • DDD)



More rarities from
a veteran piano quartet

The Ames Quartet, in residence at Iowa State University, are not only rare in the sense that they're one of the few piano quartets in the world, but also in the way that they dip into even rarer repertory. True to their earlier releases, this collection both explores three forgotten (or rather, semi-remembered) names from Paris in the first half of the 20th century and traces their musical lineage.

Théodore Dubois, mostly memorable today for denying Ravel the Prix de Rome in 1905, wielded considerable influence in his day as head of the Paris Conservatoire. But as his Quartet in A minor (1907) shows, Dubois's sensibility was already well behind the times, and the piece's genuine ability to envelop the listener in warm romantic excess tends to fade as the music progresses.

This creates a palpable let-down in the programme, which opens strongly with Reynaldo Hahn and builds solidly with Florent Schmitt, two of Dubois's more gifted students. Hahn's vocal works have made a comeback in recent years but his Quartet in G (1946) reveals an elegant structural sense even without text. Schmitt, remembered primarily for his early orientalist theatre-dance piece *La tragédie de Salomé*, shows the same emotional scope on a chamber-music scale in *Hasards* (1944).

Both teacher and students clearly outlived their times, yet from today's perspective, Hahn's Quartet (written the year before his death, when the half-Jewish refugee had returned to Paris) unfolds with a recognisable sense of regret punctuated with optimism, while *Hasards* practically dances with rhythmic immediacy. In terms of both his own time and his distance from ours, Dubois has the furthest to fall.

Ken Smith

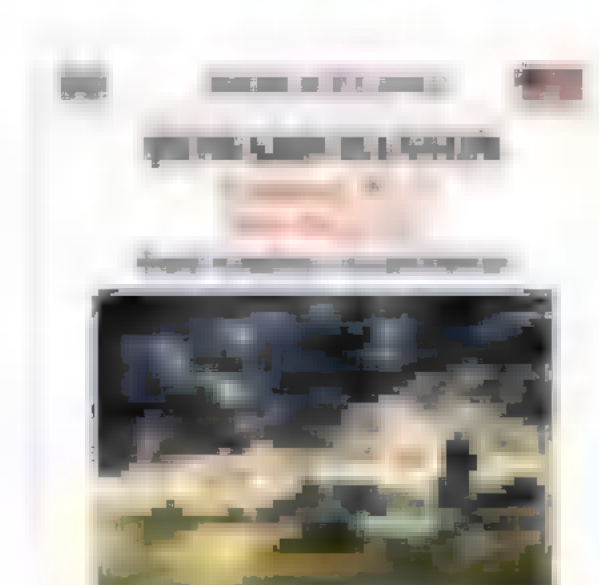
Hanson

Symphony No 3^a. Merry Mount – Suite^b

Seattle Symphony Orchestra / Gerard Schwarz

Naxos American Classics © 8 559702 (52' • DDD)

From Delos ^bDE3105 (7/92), ^aDE3709 (5/99)



Latest in Naxos's transfers
of Seattle's Hanson cycle

Resurrected from the Delos catalogue, Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony

give the Technicolor, widescreen demands of Howard Hanson's Third Symphony just what they need: a large sound-stage characterised by dynamic warmth and spatial dimensionality.

Throughout, the way that Hanson uses the orchestra argues once more that he be accepted fully into the repertoire of American orchestras whose causes he so profoundly furthered. He welcomed the challenge of sounding 'Sibelian' and dealt with it head on: the chilling, frozen blasts of glorious northern air that open the symphony are answered by a set of variations that show off the orchestra, by section and by instrument. Just when the music threatens to run out of steam, an unexpected surge of energy from deep within the harmonic core focuses attention on a final triumph. And that's just the first movement.

The Third is a big symphony, nearly 40 minutes of involving orchestral narrative, existing in an increasingly parallel-universe harmonic world; Hanson's romanticism may be 'post' in terms of European culture but it was none the less deeply felt and beautiful in a purely and uniquely American vein. The music is rich with the imagination of a man who attempted, on some level, to represent musically the path of Scandinavian pioneers who settled in the West.

The 16 minutes of the suite taken from *Merry Mount*, Hanson's only opera, is a lively but darkly allusional relic of the opera's neglect, a sort of Masterpiece Theatre treatment of Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story *The Maypole of Merry Mount*.

Listening through external DACs reveals new dimensions to the sonic miracles created by the legendary Delos production team led by Adam Stern and John Eargle. Perhaps owing to the nature of the Seattle Opera House in which the music was recorded, reproduction becomes truly sensational at higher volumes.

Laurence Vittes

L Moss

'New Paths'

The Woods^a. Racconto^b. New Paths^c. Together^d.

Flutepaths^e. String Quartet No 4^f. Korean Peaks^g.

The Swan^h. Either/Orⁱ. From the Chinese^j.

Emily's World^k. Village Scenes^l. Another Dawn^m

^kMarlene Bateman, ^kKate Egan,

^mSamantha Guevrekian, ^lKathryn Hearden *sops*

^eSarah Eckman McIver fl ^cMark Hill *ob*

^gSally McLain, ^hDavid Salness, ⁱJames Stern *vns*

^cKatherine Murdock *va* ^hEvelyn Elsing *vc* ^dChris Gekker,

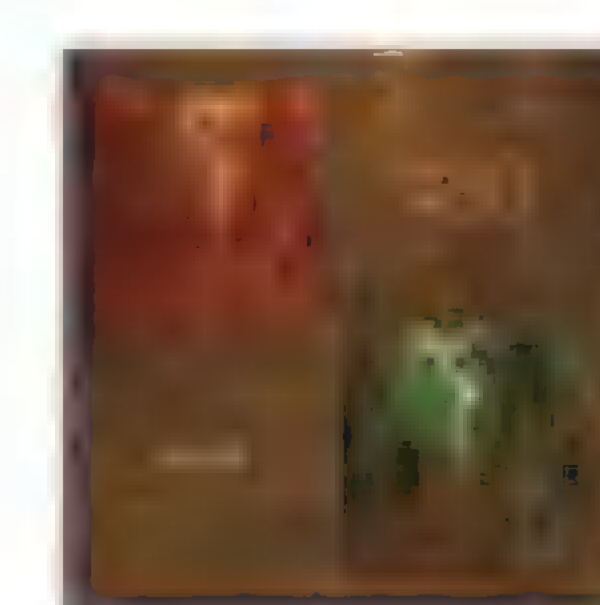
^dBrent Madsen *tpts* ^dAudrey Andrist, ⁱLura Johnson,

^{bk}Juliana Osinchuk *pfs* ^lWilliam Richards *perc*

^aCapitol Woodwind Quartet; ^fLeft Bank String Quartet;

^mStony Brook Contemporary Chamber Players

Innova © ② INNOVA777 (115' • DDD)



New chamber works
from a Maryland pedagogue

There is a very high level of comfort at work in these two discs of music by 80-something Lawrence Moss, a Los Angeles native who since 1969 has been ensconced at the outstanding music school of the University of Maryland in College Park. The ease may come from the fact that virtually all of the music on these two discs was composed for friends, freeing the composer from the demands of formality and allowing him to engage in an epigrammatic style in which motor energy fights an occasional and losing battle against the small, often humorous fragments that Moss delights in. Throughout, it is Moss's excellent ear for sound that provides music that musicians must like to play and audiences may like to hear. It is a further mark of octogenarian Moss's vitality that most of the music has been composed within the last five years.

Despite the many felicities of the mostly small pieces, it is the 16-minute String Quartet No 4 which gives the most sustained pleasure. Moss uses the instruments with idiomatic mastery, ranging from kittenish endearments to electric flashes of energy. As played by the Left Bank String Quartet with brilliant focus and timbral variety, the work's obliquely tonal homage to a Second Viennese aesthetic stays around just long enough to charm and – in its modest way – dazzle.

Neither *Korean Peaks* (violin duo) nor *The Swan* (violin and cello) represents anything exceptional, but the composer scores with three sets of songs, particularly *Either/Or* (2009), a *tour de force* for soprano and percussion. In each set the music takes flight from the sensibilities derived from poetry by an eclectic assemblage including Emily Dickinson, Omar Khayyám and Rainer Maria Rilke, all of which Moss weaves into musical fabric with enigmatic Taoist threads.

The title of the release comes from the multiplicity of new paths that Moss seems continually to be embarking upon, as exemplified in *The Woods* for woodwind quartet, which follows the flora and fauna encountered on trails in the woods where the composer likes to go jogging. The music throughout is gentle, touching and painted in sensible human proportions. 'New paths in old forests,' Moss comments, '...same old genes, newly expressed.' At the age of 84, he is in a good position to know.

Laurence Vittes

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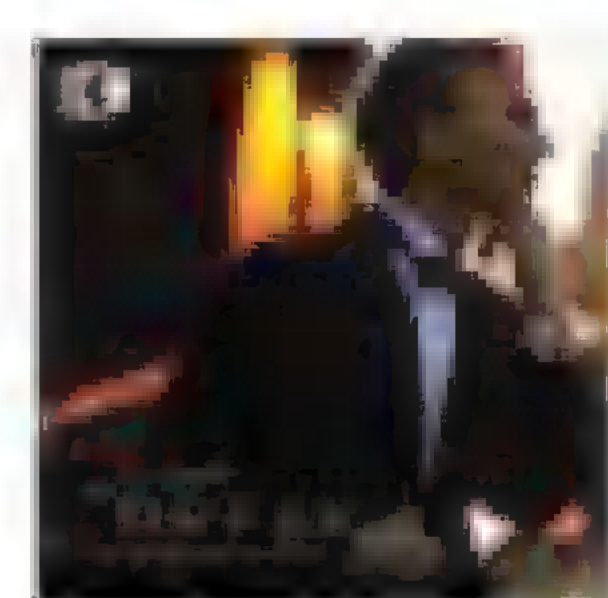
Boston Symphony Orchestra players with a musical glance at 20th-century France

'Nightbreak'

Brahms Ballade, Op 10 No 1. Intermezzo, Op 116 No 4. Waltz, Op 39 No 9 **Glass** Dracula Suite **Liszt** Années de pèlerinage: année 1, 'Suisse', S160 - No 6, Vallée d'Obermann; No 9, Les cloches de Genève; année 3, S163 - No 4, Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este **Rihm** Brahmsliebewaltzer

Bruce Levingston *pf*

Sono Luminus © DSL92144 (64' • DDD)



Works old and new from a serial musical commissioner

Bruce Levingston seems to have patented a thematic, multi-composer programme concept for CDs where Philip Glass's music appears on each release, thereby tapping into this composer's 'non-classical' audience. According to the pianist, the present disc's selections vividly display the light and darkness of the human soul, while the 'Nightbreak' title refers to that moment when day meets night and the spectrums of the sun and moon mesh together.

More importantly, the pieces sound well together. Interpretatively speaking, Levingston fares best in a suite culled and arranged from Glass's string quartet music for the 1931 film *Dracula*, bringing arrestingly contrasting dynamics and colour shadings to the opening and closing themes, and evoking detached and sustained string bowing in the 'In his cell' section. While the Brahms and Liszt pieces also benefit from Levingston's masterly textural control, his predominantly slow tempi and propensity for stretching phrases often cause the music to ramble, which explains why 'Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este' and 'Les cloches de Genève' clock in at nearly two minutes longer than most versions. Wolfgang Rihm's *Brahmsliebewaltzer* might represent

a waltz Brahms would have written had he studied with Schoenberg and checked his charm and imagination at the door. One cannot tell that the recordings stem from two distinct venues; indeed, the roomy ambience befits both Levingston's repertoire and his rapt introspection.

Jed Distler

'Profanes et sacrées'

Debussy Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp

Dutilleux Les citations **Françaix** Dixtuor

Ravel Introduction and Allegro

Tomasi Cinq danses profanes et sacrées

Boston Symphony Chamber Players

BSO Classics © 1102 (76' • DDD/DSD)



Boston players in repertoire they almost came to own

The works by Ravel and Debussy on the Boston Symphony Chamber Players' new disc, 'Profane et sacrées', by no means overwhelm the remaining pieces of 20th-century French chamber music. If anything, the scores by Henri Tomasi, Henri Dutilleux and Jean Françaix are striking complements to their more well-known counterparts.

What's partially distinctive about the offerings is varied instrumentation that creates a panoply of rich sonic possibilities. For example, in Dutilleux's *Les citations* the oboe, harpsichord and double bass share the inventive stage with assorted percussion.

Dutilleux's score pays homage to several colleagues, including Peter Pears with a quote from Britten's *Peter Grimes*. Elsewhere, the music explodes with animated and colourful gestures, including oboe multiphonics. Tomasi's *Cinq danses profanes et sacrées* gives members of a wind quintet deliciously

pungent and vivid material in solo and ensemble configurations. The wind quintet joins a string quintet in Françaix's *Dixtuor*, which is whimsical, lyrical and full of smashing tunes.

The performances, recorded in concert, are exemplary, juxtaposing finesse with zest. Harpist Jessica Zhou makes exquisite contributions in the Ravel and Debussy, and John Ferrillo isn't afraid to let his oboe honk rousingly in the Dutilleux. Decades ago, the Boston Symphony was renowned for its affinity with French music; this disc suggests that matters of Gallic style continue to course through the ensemble's veins. **Donald Rosenberg**

'Sprezzatura'

Britten Lachrymae, Op 48 **Chihara** Viola Sonata

Hindemith Viola Sonata **Siskind** Etwas für Bratsche (Etwas rasch!)

Shelly Tramposh *va* **Cullan Bryant** *pf*

Ravello © RR7818 (60' • DDD)

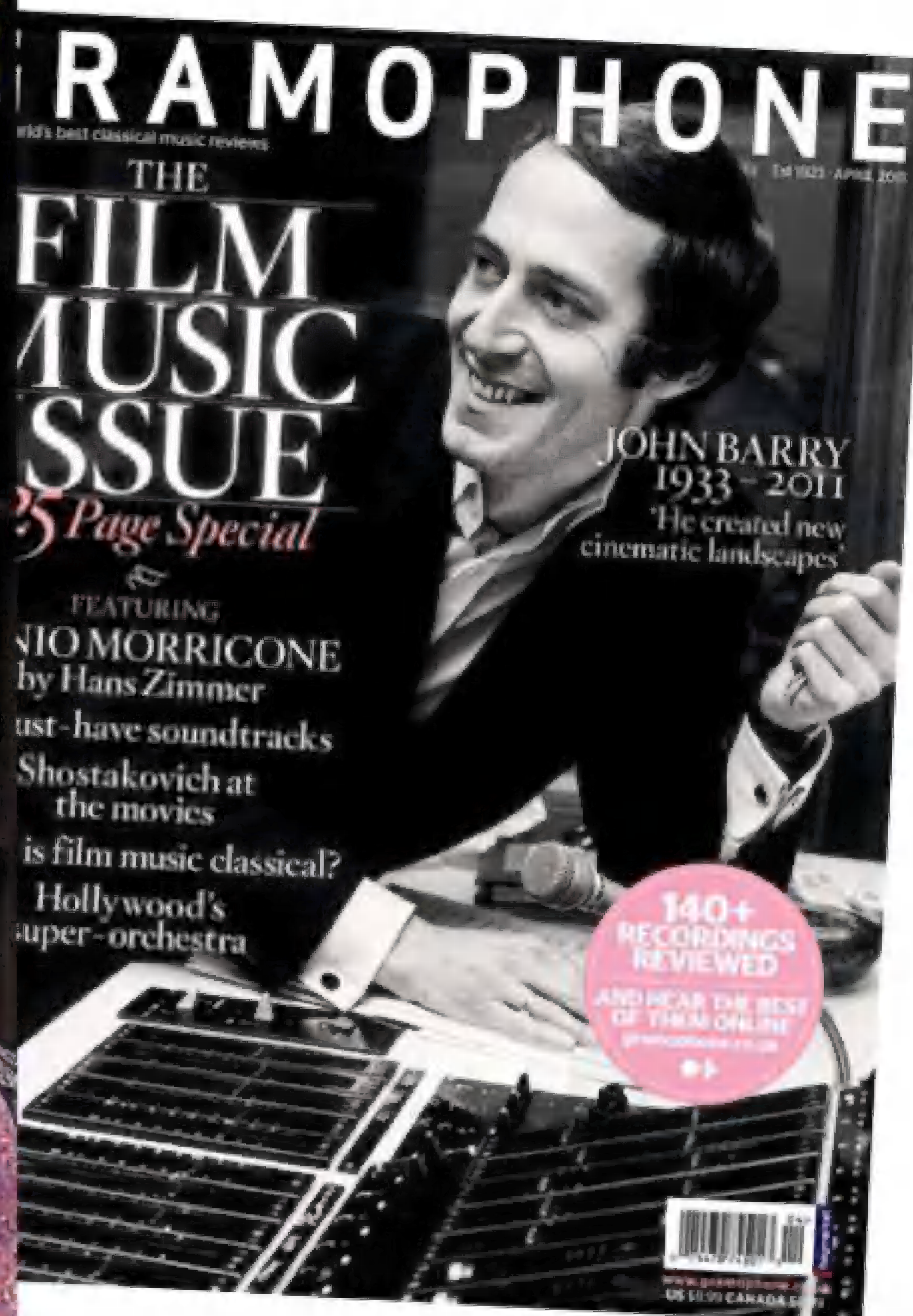


20th-century works from the Crane School's viola professor

The word 'sprezzatura' comes from Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) and refers to 'the rehearsed spontaneity, studied carelessness and well-practised naturalness that underlie persuasive discourse'. These qualities characterise the two world premieres and two relatively familiar 20th-century viola staples featured on this disc, as well as the performers.

The programme opens with Paul Chihara's melodic, graceful and beautifully balanced three-movement Viola Sonata, highlighted by a central *Tempo di menuetto* full of wistful harmonic twists and turns. By contrast, Paul Siskind's six-minute *Etwas* features assertive ostinatos that trade back and forth between instruments, and towering, wide-leaping intervals. Viola player Shelly Tramposh's arpeggiated chord-playing brings a welcome cutting-edge quality to the climaxes of Britten's *Lachrymae*. Although her bright, silvery tone sometimes turns nasal and unlovely in high positions, the faultless intonation in exposed sustained passages – such as in the Hindemith Sonata's finale – compensates. However, Cullan Bryant's impeccably calibrated and ultra-responsive handling of the piano parts in every selection borders on mind-reading, and explains why he is considered one of the classiest collaborative pianists on the scene. Gorgeous engineering seals my recommendation of a disc that ought to hold appeal far beyond the viola community. **Jed Distler**

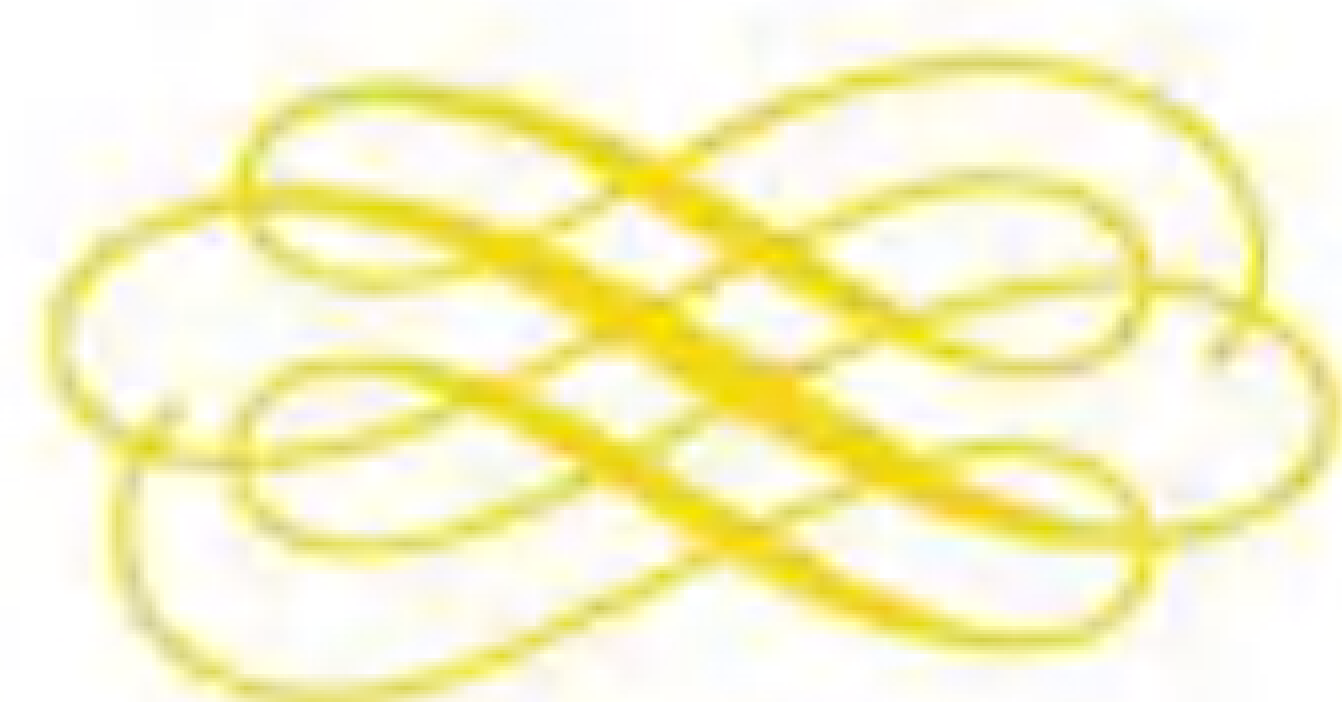
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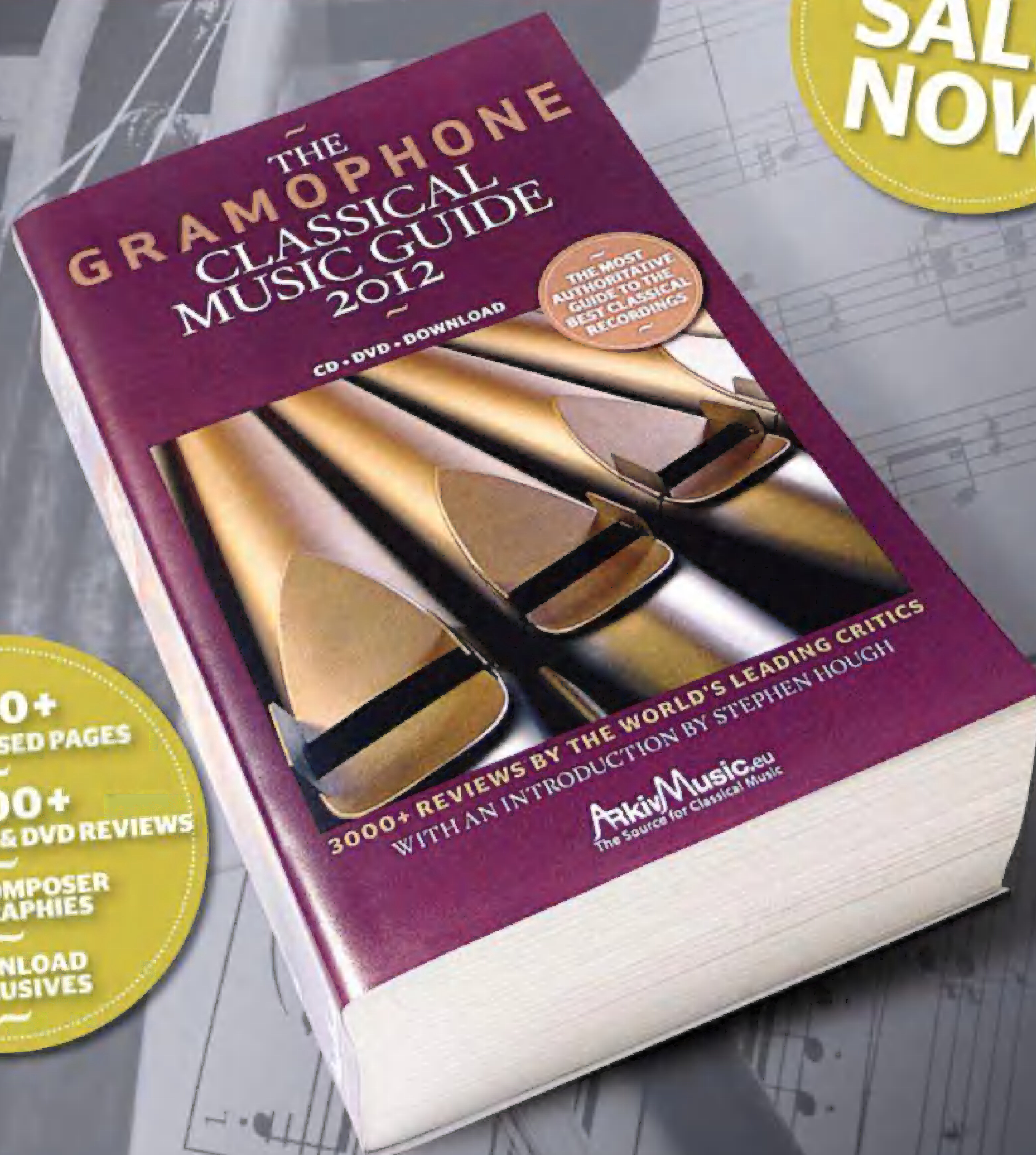
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GRAMOPHONE is published by Haymarket Consumer, Teddington Studios, Broom Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 9BE, United Kingdom. www.gramophone.co.uk email gramophone@haymarket.com Volume 89 Number 1081

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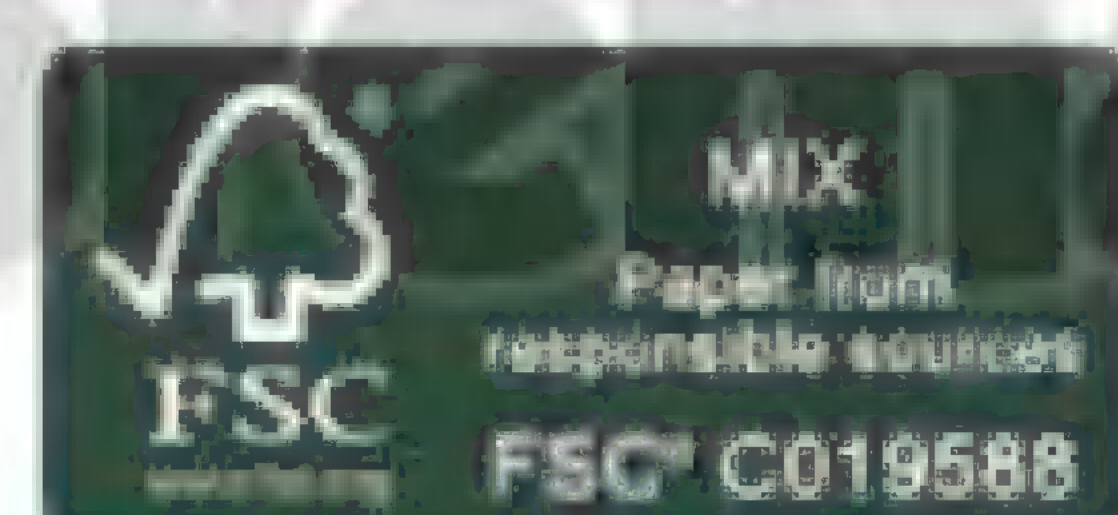
Kevin Costello



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North American editions: *Gramophone* (USPS 881080) is published 11 times a year by Haymarket Magazines Ltd, c/o Mercury International Ltd of 365 Blair Road, Avenel, New Jersey 07001. For North American subscription rates please contact: Tel: 1-866-918-1446; email: haymarket@msnews.com. Periodicals paid at Rahway, NJ. Postmaster please send address correction changes to *Gramophone*, c/o Mercury International at the above address.

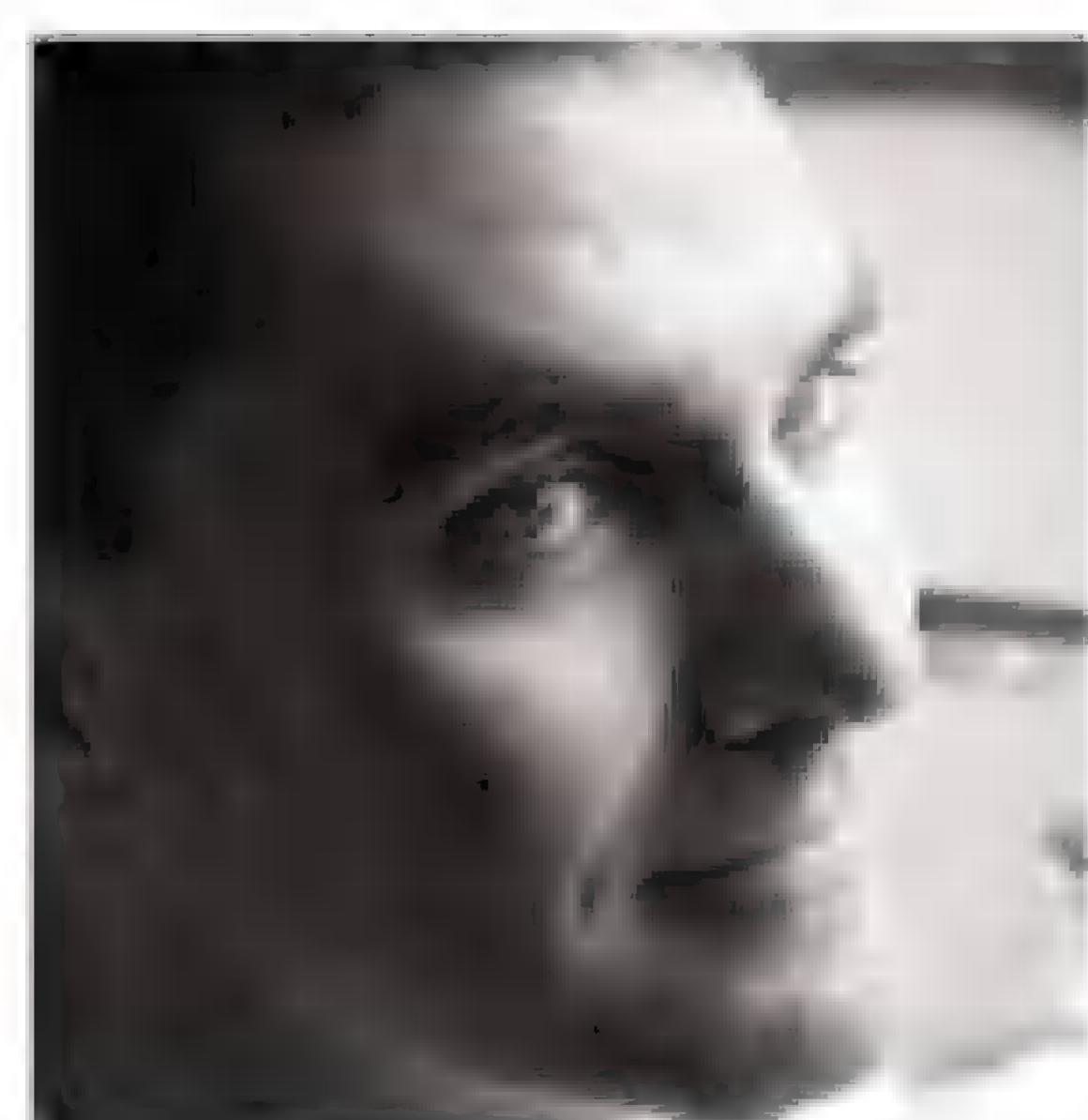
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THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



Schubert's final year inspires wonder and a poignant sense of 'what if?' says our cover-feature writer **RICHARD WIGMORE**. 'How anyone could ever have patronised Schubert as a cosy Biedermeier figure beggars belief. The overwhelming beauty and visionary power of these works seem more miraculous each time you return to them.'



MICHAEL McMANUS, who writes about the great conductor Günter Wand for our Icons feature, described the experience as 'a great pleasure, and really rather moving, to think and write again about my old friend, 10 years after his death...And to lose myself in his recordings, as I used to lose (and find) myself in his concert performances.'

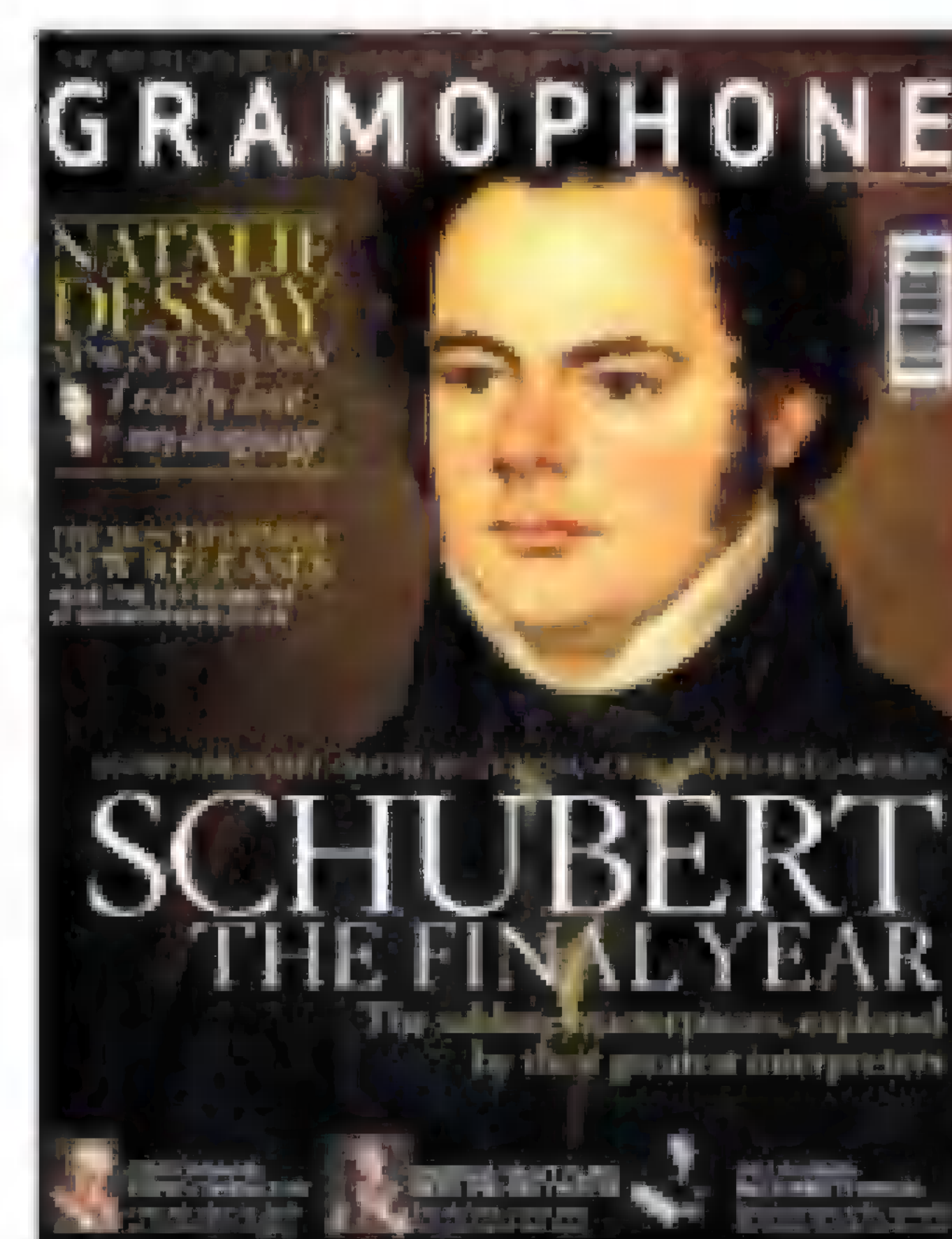


GUY RICKARDS has long admired the controlled anarchy in Villa-Lobos's music, which he first met in Stokowski's recording of *Uirapurú* and his arrangement of the *Modinha* from *Bachiana* No 1. Having listened to nearly 200 recordings of the pieces, he has an even deeper respect for one of the greatest compositional geniuses of the 20th century.

GRAMOPHONE

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Celebrating Schubert – and the greatest recording artists



By any measure of artistic achievement, the music written by Schubert in 1828 is remarkable. That it was the last year of his life makes it all the more astonishing. The F minor Fantasie piano duet, the final three piano sonatas, *Schwanengesang*, the Mass in E flat, the C major String Quintet – these works feel not so much conclusions to a short but brilliant career but rather hint tantalisingly and tragically at what might have followed.

Gramophone critic Richard Wigmore tells the story of Schubert's final year, discussing those profound masterpieces with some of their most powerful interpreters.

Two of those artists, pianists Alfred Brendel and Mitsuko Uchida, appear among our nominations for the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame, our new initiative to celebrate the people who have changed the history of classical music recording. We've drawn up a list of musicians, producers and executives whose talent, vision and genius have enriched the catalogue from the earliest days of wax cylinders to the digital world of today. Many names – Callas and Caruso, Karajan and Klemperer – you will expect to find; others, many still performing today, may be more of a surprise. We're asking for your help to decide which 50 will be the first to be welcomed into the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame. Visit gramophone.co.uk to find out more and to

'We've drawn up a list of musicians, producers and executives whose talent, vision and genius have enriched the catalogue, from wax cylinders to today'

let us have your nominations (voting closes a week or so after the publication of this issue). We'll reveal the final list in our May issue.

Another wonderful artist is the German violinist Isabelle Faust. Chosen by *Gramophone* as our Young Artist of the Year back in 1997, she has more than fulfilled our expectations, receiving another *Gramophone* Award in 2010 for her disc of Beethoven sonatas. It's

Beethoven she returns to this month, to the Violin Concerto, performed with Claudio Abbado and Orchestra Mozart. She pairs it with Berg's Violin Concerto, which she talks to us about in our Musician and the Score feature. Both are outstanding, characteristically intense performances – and the release is our Recording of the Month.



Martin Cullingford

martin.cullingford@haymarket.com



March 2012

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GRAMOPHONE *Choice*



Informed by our unrivalled panel of critics, we choose the month's must-hear recordings



Recording of the Month

'Faust brings a suggestion of gaiety that renders more poignant the effect of the dark, complex harmony – a bright memory rendered sad and bitter'

BEETHOVEN. BERG

Violin Concertos

Isabelle Faust *vn*

Orchestra Mozart / Claudio Abbado

Harmonia Mundi HCM90 2105

► FOR THE REVIEW BY DUNCAN DRUCE, TURN TO PAGE 40



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SCHUMANN

Symphonies Nos 1 & 3

Deutsche

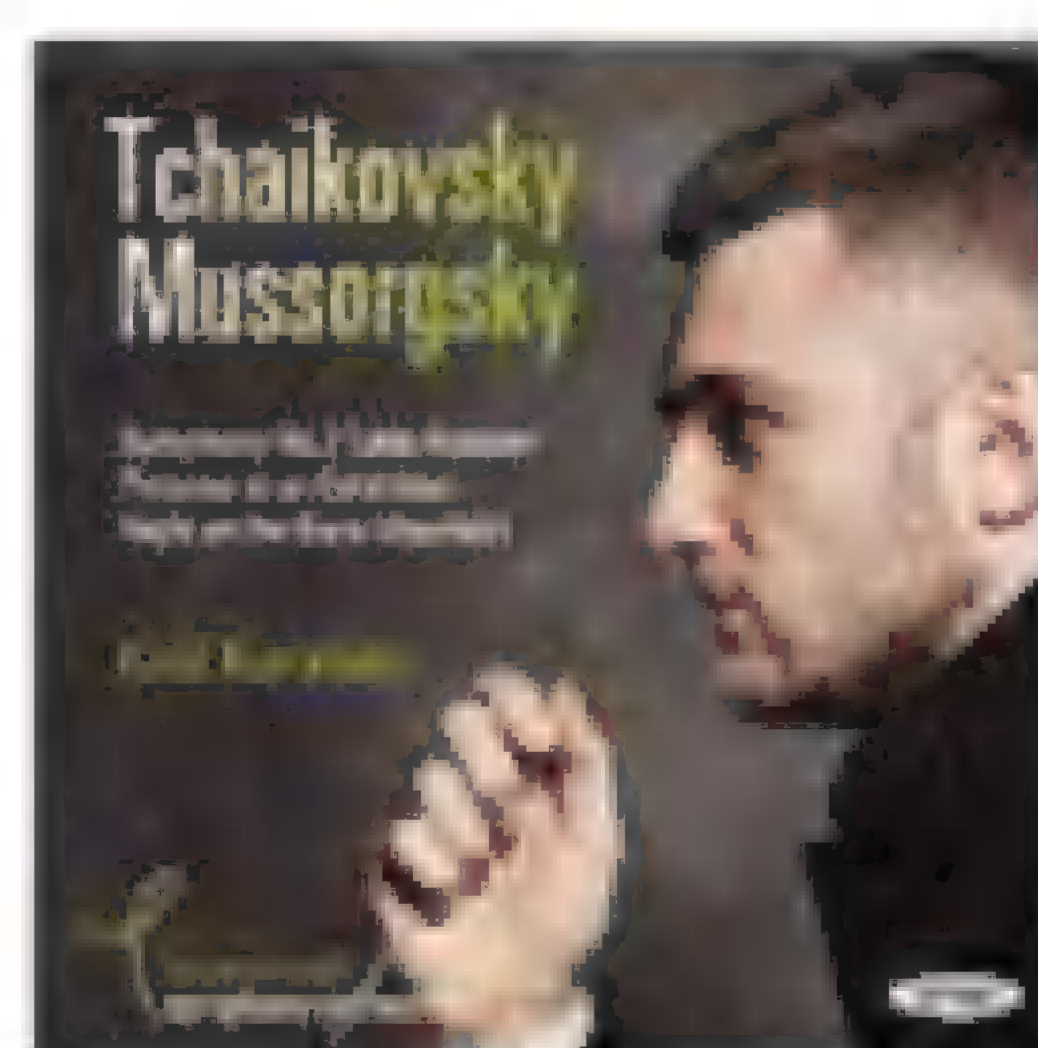
Kammerphilharmonie

Bremen / Paavo Järvi

RCA 88697 96431-2

'The resourceful orchestra is evidently manned by players who listen very closely to one another. An unreserved recommendation.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 47



TCHAIKOVSKY.

MUSSORGSKY

Orchestral Works

Bournemouth Symphony

Orchestra / Kirill Karabits

Onyx ONYX4074

'Most ignore the metric ambiguity and place those two thwacks firmly on the beat – but Karabits savours the unruliness of the gesture.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 49



BEETHOVEN

Late String Quartets

Brentano Quartet

Aeon AECD1110

'What is so satisfying is the overall warmth of the playing, with speeds ideally chosen and never forced, with natural rubato and shading and with wonderfully sustained *pianissimos*.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 52



BACH. PISENDEL

Solo Violin Sonatas

Amandine Beyer *vn*

Zig-Zag Territoires

ZZT110902

'Beyer never plays on the listener's emotions but instead maintains a sliver of detachment that, in the context of her stylish performances, seems appropriate.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 60



LISZT

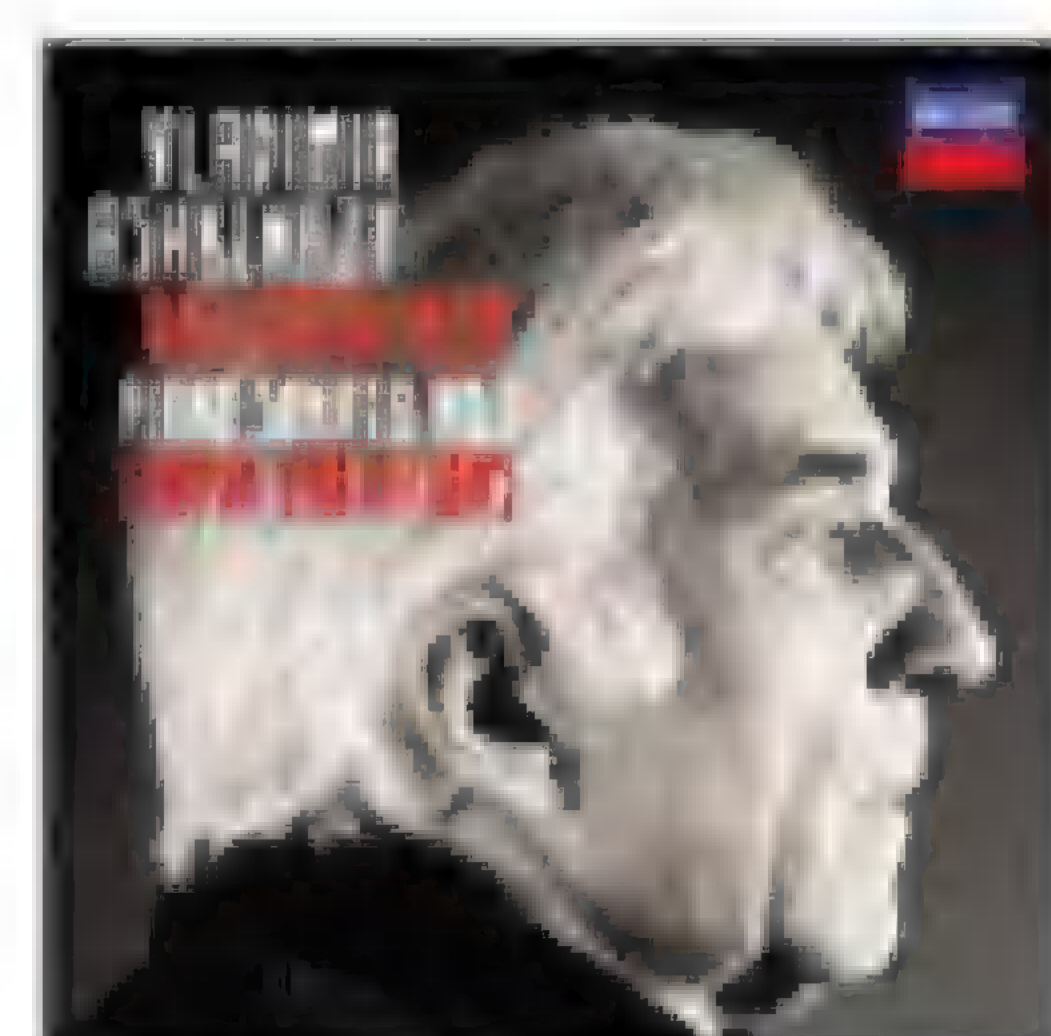
Années de pèlerinage

Bertrand Chamayou *pf*

Naïve V5260

'In the three Petrarch Sonnets Chamayou's soaring sense of ecstasy is complemented by blazing eruptions of passion, everything engulfed as it were in restless and romantic enquiry.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 61

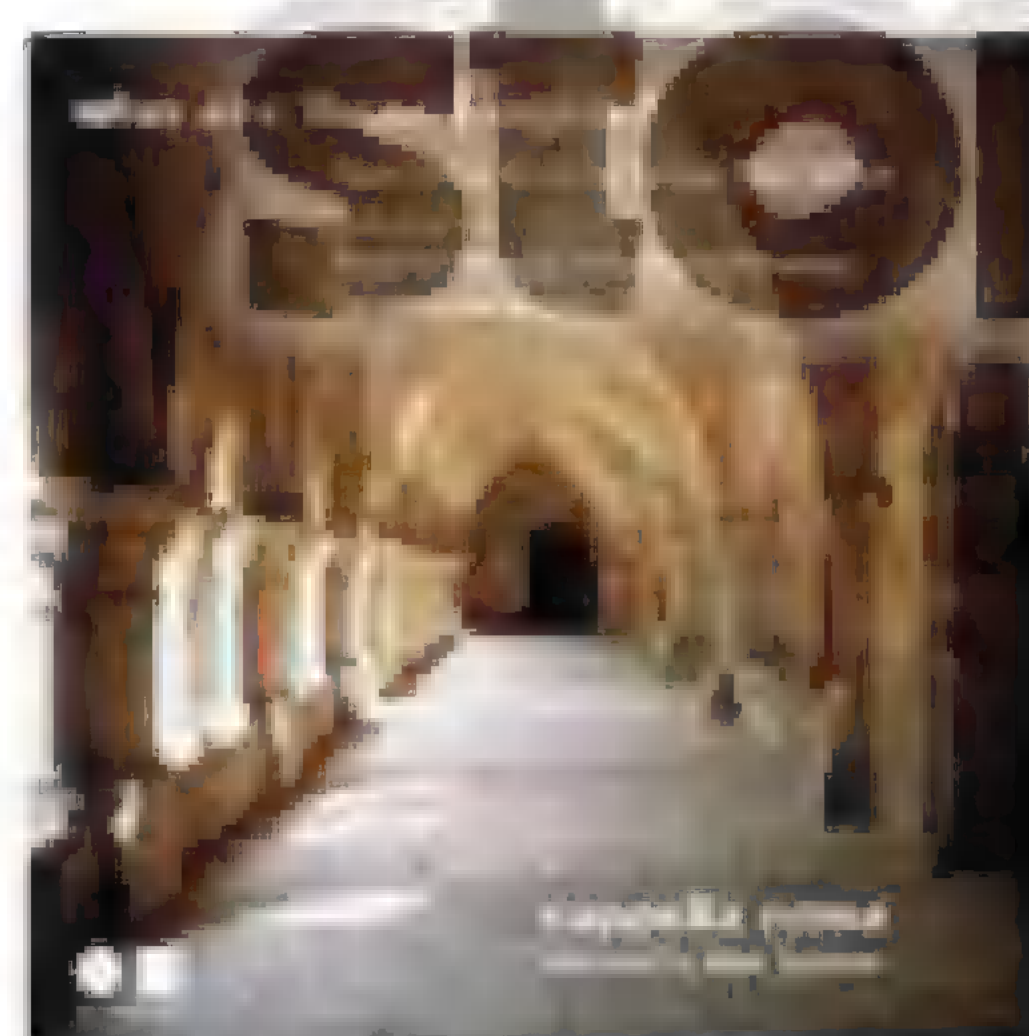
**RACHMANINOV**

Piano Sonata No 1, etc

Vladimir Ashkenazy *pf*

Decca 478 2938DH

'These may be Ashkenazy's first recordings of these works but they sound as though they have been in his fingers for a long time. A notable adjunct to the recordings of his youth.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 63****MacMILLAN**

Who are these Angels?

Capella Nova /**Alan Tavener**

Linn CKD383

'Illuminating performances which capture MacMillan's profound sense of the sacred, but here the sense of looking back over the centuries is especially strong.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 70****MAHLER. PFITZNER. R STRAUSS**

Songs

Christianne Stotijn *mez***Joseph Breinl** *pf*

Onyx ONYX4075

'Sung not just with her customary mastery but always with something significant to discover. Stotijn's performances make you examine the texts anew.'

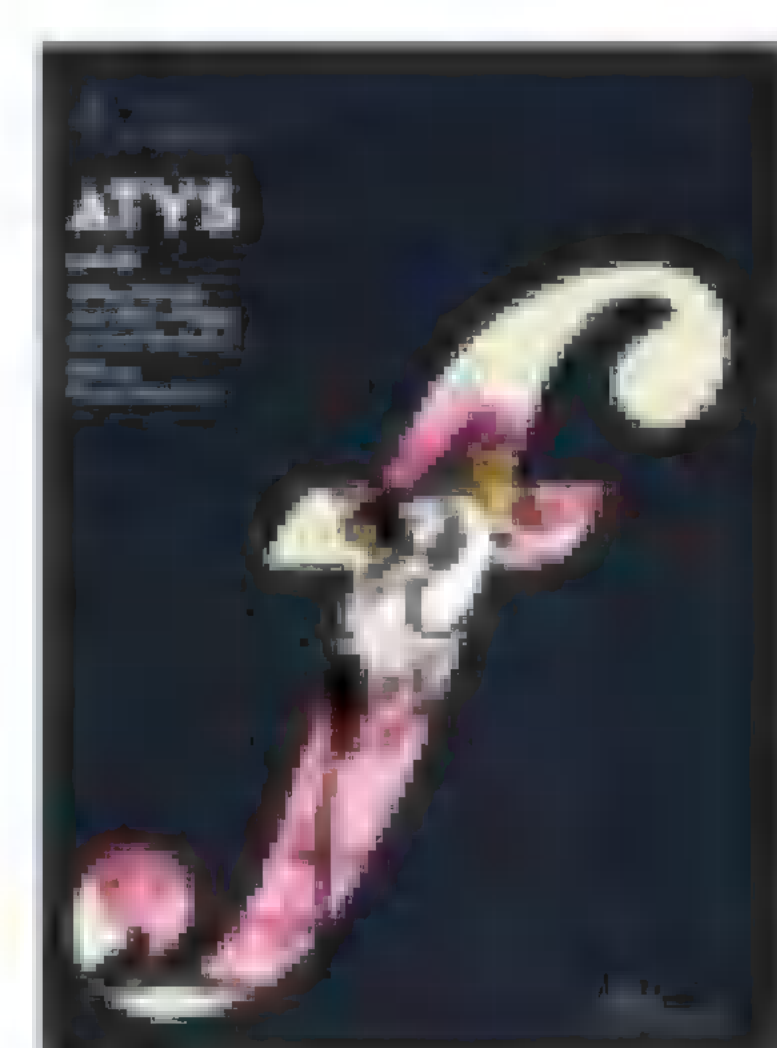
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 72****FALVETTI**

Il diluvio universale

Namur Chamber Choir;**Cappella Mediterranea /****Leonardo García Alarcón**

Ambronay AMY026

'The rehabilitation of a composition bursting with imagination and gripping drama. Frankly, it is hard to believe it has lain unheard for so long.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 78****DVD****LULLY**

Atys

Les Arts Florissants /**William Christie;****Jean-Marie Villégier &****François Roussillon** *dirs*

FRA Productions FRA006

'The reputation of Christie and Les Arts Florissants dates from their 1987 production of *Atys*.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 78****Reissue****BEETHOVEN**

Early Quartets

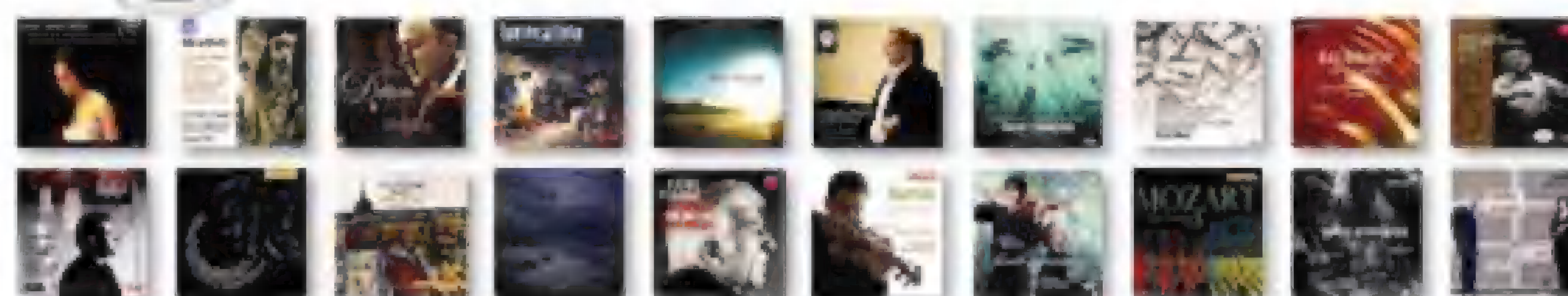
Budapest Quartet

Bridge BRIDGE9342

'David Starobin and his colleagues have achieved a dazzling overview of the legendary Budapest Quartet's Beethoven style during its latter years.'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**

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In 1828 Schubert produced a prolific outpouring of superb works, offering a tantalising hint of what might have been. Richard Wigmore explores the last months of a genius composer.

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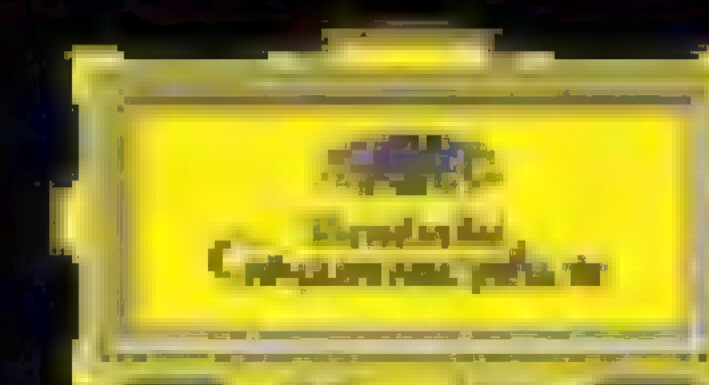
97 The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra is 75 years old



A finer palette of musical colour comes from a perfect mix of hues, tints and layering of notes. To compare this piece of work to a masterpiece hanging on the walls of the Louvre may seem peculiar, but impressionism is no stranger to the ear. Debussy is unquestionably an Impressionist, one who borrows and develops to take music a stage further. This is why, when asked, pianist Rafał describes him as "the King of colours".

Rafał Blechacz **Debussy, Szymanowski**

1CD 4782730 www.deutschegrammophon.com



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A full-page photograph of violinist Anne Akiko Meyers. She is standing outdoors on a paved path, with trees in the background. She is wearing a dark, strapless, floor-length gown with a large bow at the waist. She is looking over her shoulder towards the camera, with her hands near her face.

Anne Akiko Meyers

AIR

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Steven Mercurio, conductor

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Alongside Bach's A minor and E major concertos, American virtuoso violinist **Anne Akiko Meyers** has recorded the *Concerto for Two Violins*, performing both parts on the Ex-Napoleon Molitor and the Royal Spanish Stradivarius. Also included are exquisite new arrangements of *Air* from the Suite No. 3, *Largo* from the Harpsichord Concerto in F minor, and the Bach-Gounod *Ave Maria*.



THE BACHGUILD

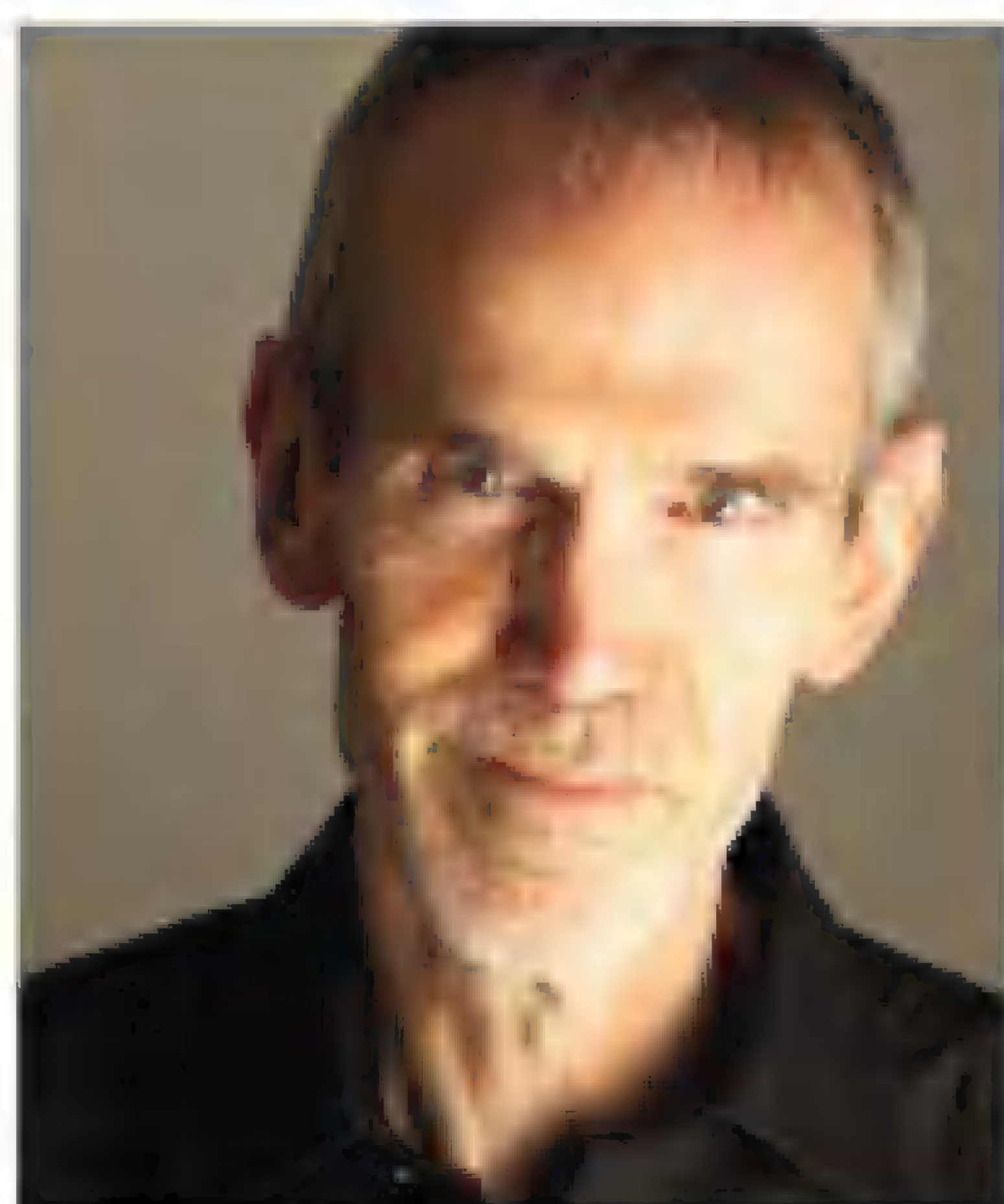
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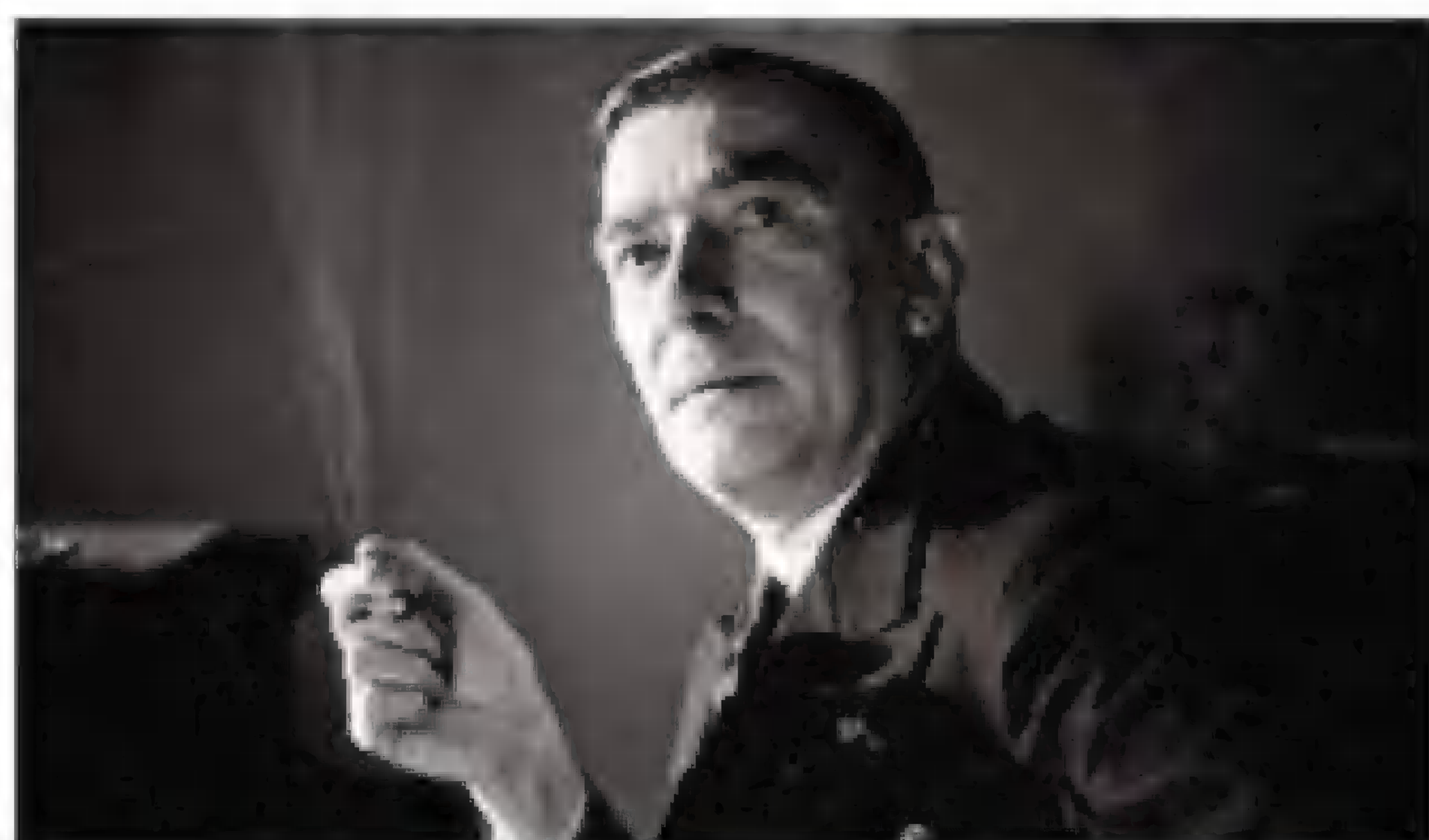
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ONLINE FEATURES



COMPOSING THE GAMES

The London Olympics isn't all about record-breaking athletic achievements (though we're excited about that too). There's also an artistic dimension – the Cultural Olympiad – of which a major part is New Music 20x12. Composers from varying genres have been commissioned to write 20 new pieces, each of 12 minutes in length and inspired by the games. Each new work will be available to buy from the NMC label – and you can sample them as and when they're released at gramophone.co.uk. We begin with Howard Skempton's (above) *Five Rings Triples* – a work for bell ringers which was premiered on New Year's Eve. Look out for many more.



UNLOCKING SZYMANOWSKI

This March marks the 75th anniversary of the death of Karol Szymanowski, the Polish composer whose music seems, at long last, to have found a place in the repertoire and is drawing performances of particular power and intensity from some of the most thoughtful of today's artists. We offer a guide to his key works and suggest the finest interpretations to explore.



GRAMOPHONE
HALL OF FAME

CELEBRATING GREATNESS

We're launching the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame. As explained in this month's editorial (see page 3), we're inviting you to help us choose 50 people – musicians, producers or record label executives – who have changed the history of classical music on record. Will Maria Callas (pictured) be there? A fair bet perhaps – but who else? Visit gramophone.co.uk to find out more.



J. S. Bach St. John Passion (1724 version)

Monica Huggett
Portland Baroque Orchestra
Charles Daniels, tenor - Evangelist
Cappella Romana

"PBO's bracing, crisp, urgent and emotionally searing recording is the most gripping I've heard"

– Oregon ArtsWatch



AV 2236 – 2 CDs

Shostakovich String Quartets Nos. 7 and 8

Beethoven String Quartet Op. 59, No. 1 "Rasumovsky"

Valentin Berlinsky Quartet

"Hats off music lovers, a new string quartet has arrived! The Valentin Berlinsky Quartet's impressive disc of Beethoven and Shostakovich showcases superb music-making and spectacular sonics. Without doubt this is a quartet that has a bright future." – David Zinman



AV 2253

Beethoven Symphony No. 9 "Choral"

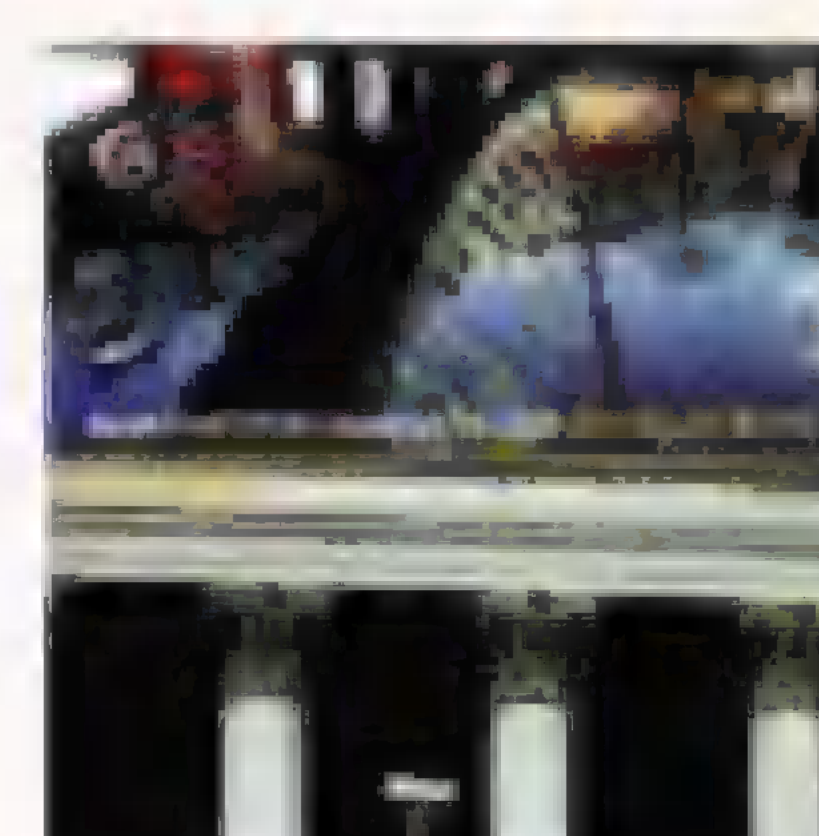
Manchester Camerata
Douglas Boyd, conductor
Rebecca von Lipinski, soprano
Anna Grevelius, mezzo-soprano
Peter Wedd, tenor
Roderick Williams, baritone
City of Birmingham Symphony
Orchestra Chorus



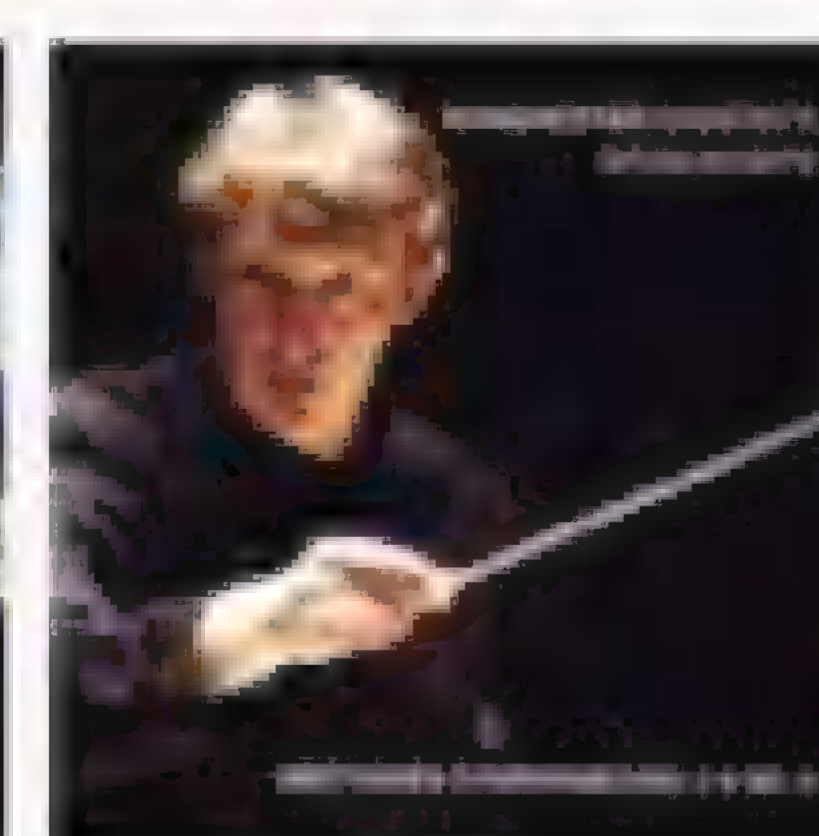
AV 2245

The conclusion of Douglas Boyd's and Manchester Camerata's critically acclaimed Beethoven cycle, a vivid live recording of the Ninth "Choral" Symphony

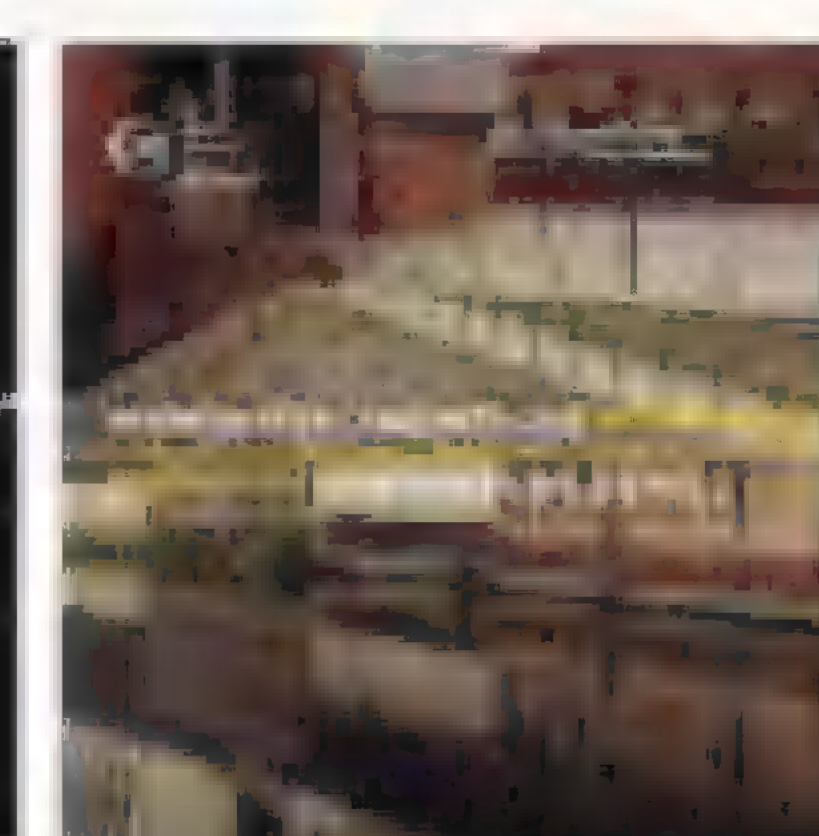
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Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3
"Eroica"
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Beethoven
Symphonies Nos. 2 & 5
AV 0040



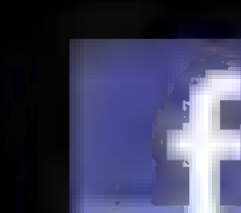
Beethoven
Symphonies Nos. 4 & 7
AV 2169



Beethoven
Symphonies Nos. 6 "Pastoral" & 8
AV 2242

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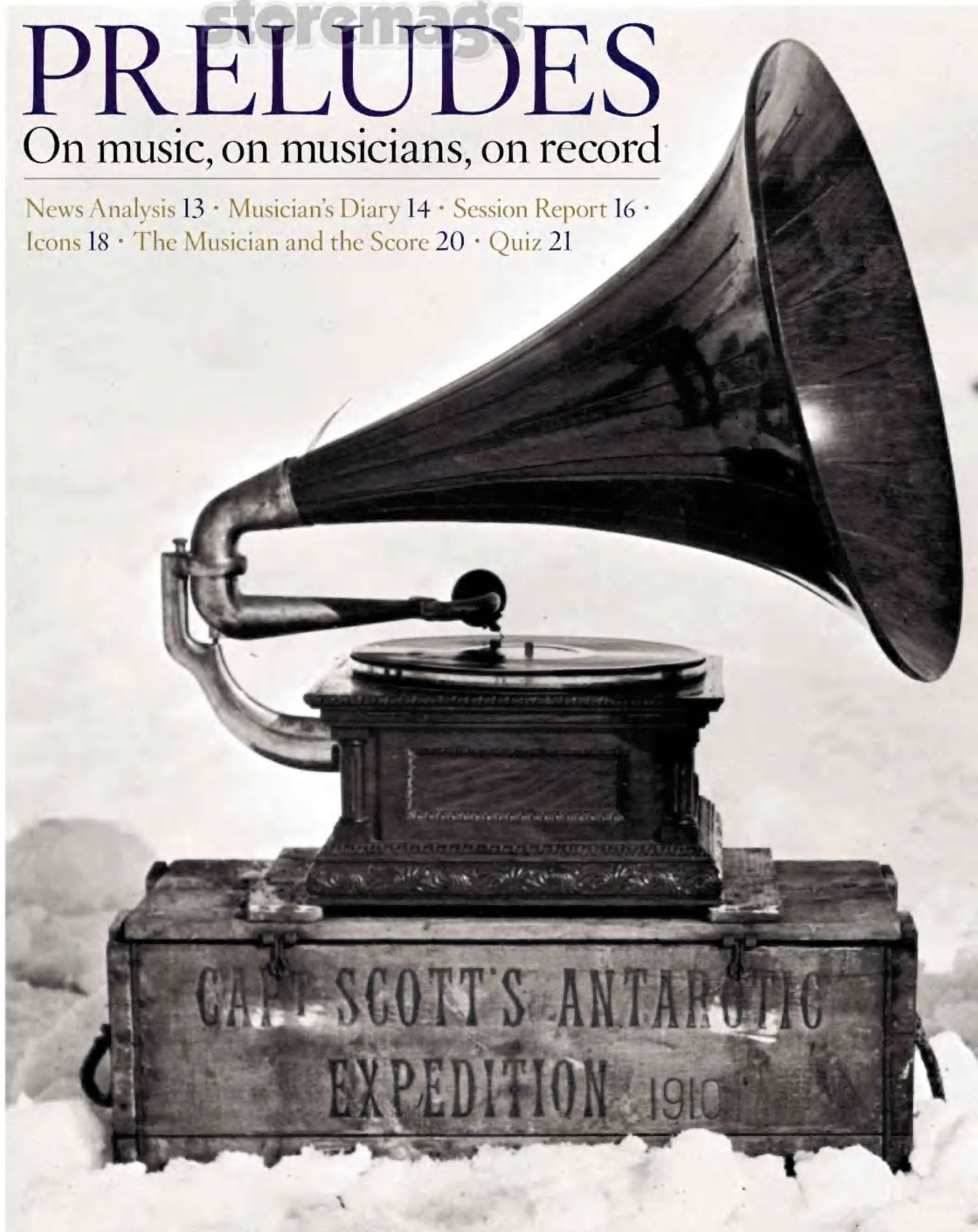
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PRELUDES

On music, on musicians, on record

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Chris of the Antarctic

Where

Ross Dependency,
Antarctica

The details

Chris, the sledge dog,
with Scott's Antarctic
expedition gramophone

A century ago, Captain Scott and his team set out on an ill-fated journey to conquer the South Pole. The City of London Sinfonia, in collaboration with the Scott Polar Research Institute, are commemorating the event with 'Conquering the Antarctic', a concert tour in February and March which retells the story of the epic expedition through music, words and photography – including the world premiere of Cecilia McDowall's *Seventy Degrees Below Zero*. Given Scott's attachment to his gramophone – shown here with Chris the dog – the musical tribute is very appropriate.



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PHOTOGRAPHY: SCOTT POLAR RESEARCH INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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 The Academy of Ancient Music · Christopher Hogwood
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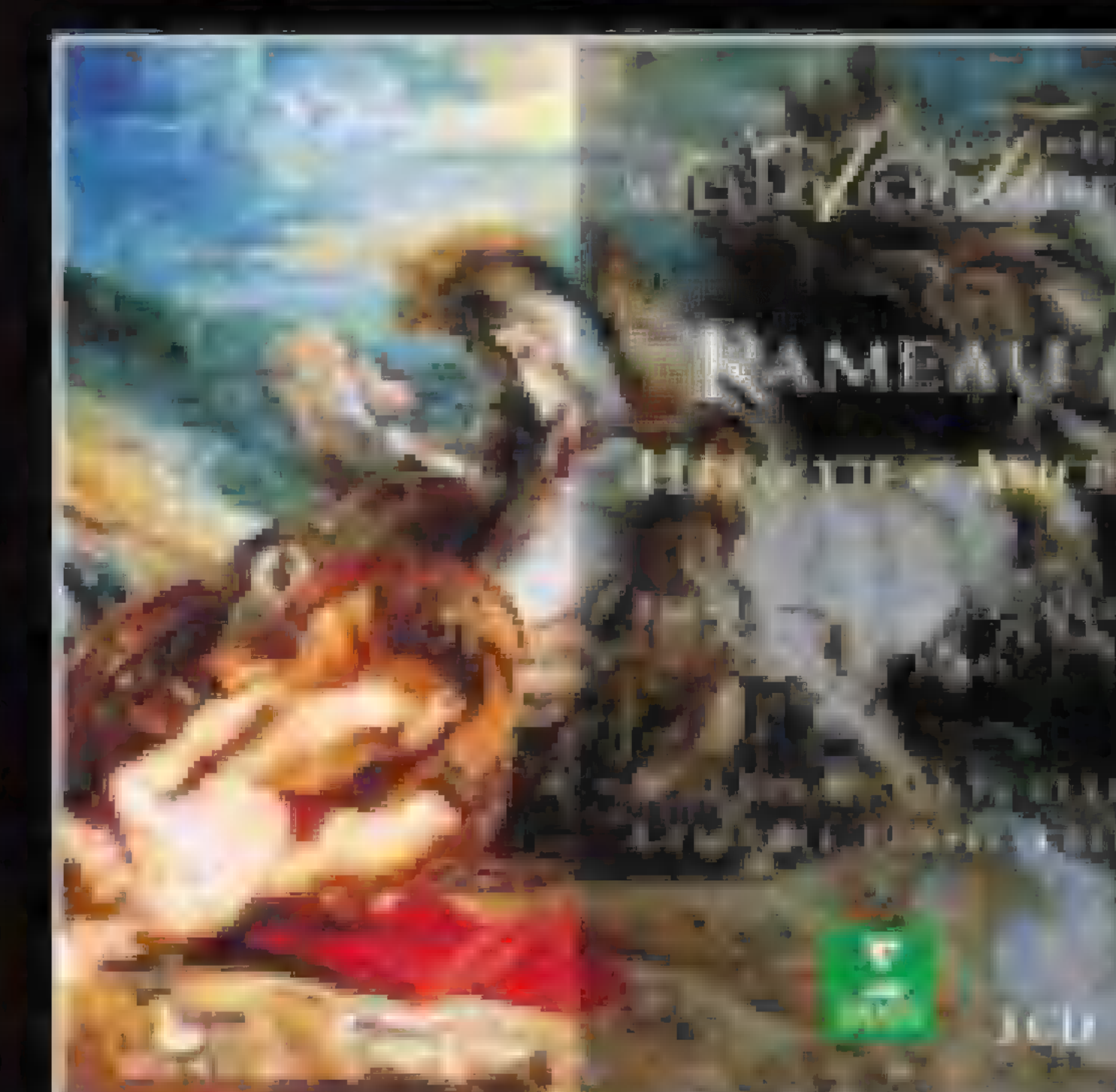
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Gramophone



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 voices of her generation

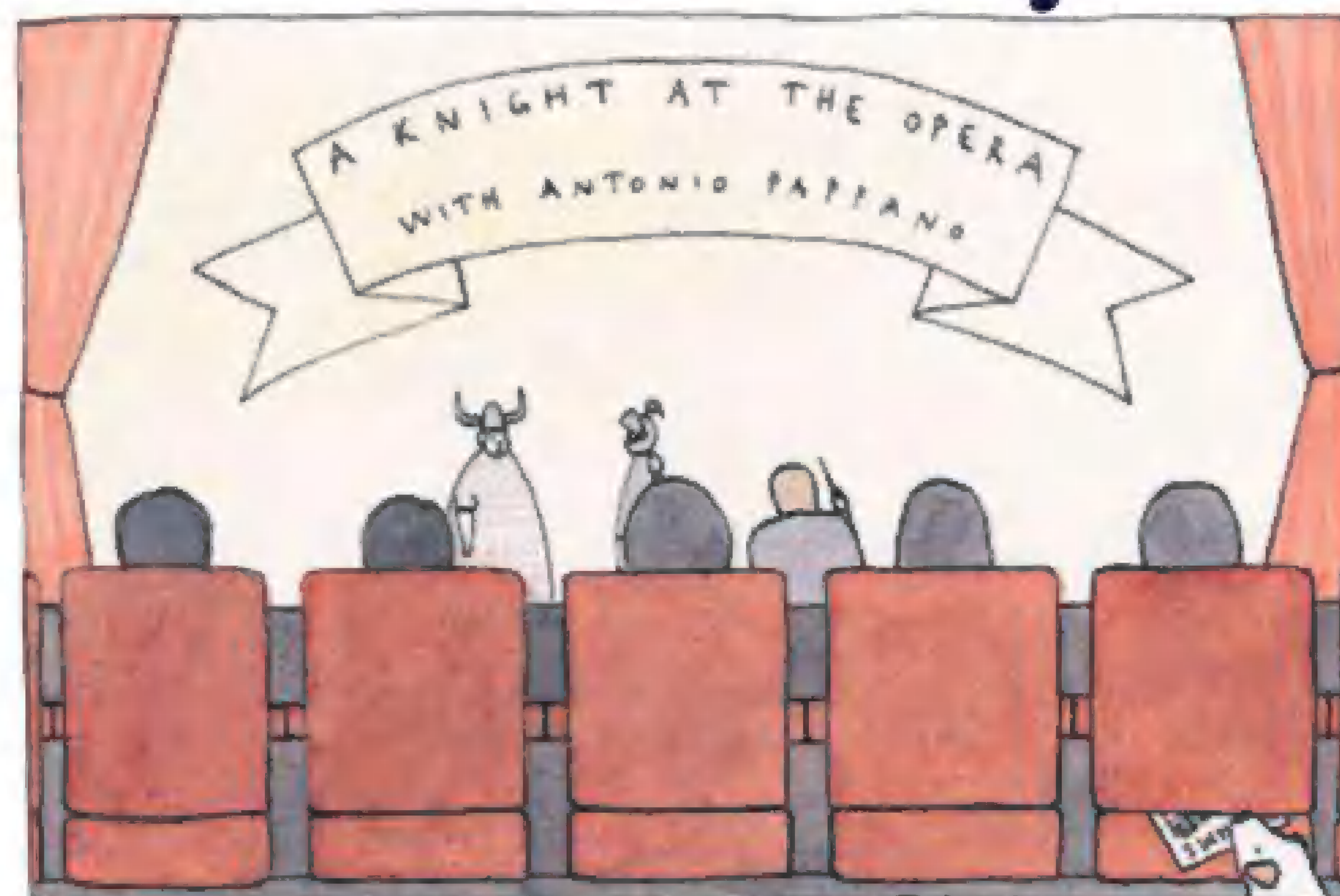
'Pappano's knighthood came as small surprise to the artistic community'

Given the amount of scholarship devoted to Brahms over the past century or more, it seems inconceivable that 'new' works might still be popping up. Yet with the New Year came a new composition – a small piano work found languishing in an archive by conductor Christopher Hogwood and premiered on BBC Radio 3 by András Schiff on January 21. The two-minute work, called *Albumblatt*, was discovered in the library of Princeton University and is believed to have been composed in 1853, when Brahms was 20. Although elements of the piece will be familiar to discerning listeners – it features a theme that appears in the second movement of Brahms's Horn Trio, Op 40 – Hogwood claims the work predates the Trio by 12 years. Excitingly, the discovery is far more than a sketch – it's a fully formed piece of music, complete with dynamics, marks of expression and repeats. Due to be published along with Hogwood's new edition of the Trio, the work will undoubtedly lend a good deal of insight into the compositional workings and techniques of a great composer who famously destroyed many of his sketches and manuscripts.

Also announced as the curtain drew on 2011 was the New Year Honours List, with a knighthood going to Royal Opera House music director Antonio Pappano. While 'knight at the opera' jokes continue to run thick and fast (see above), Pappano was humble in his acceptance of the award: 'I am astonished but hugely honoured by this news,' he said. With the conductor being such a talented and high-profile ambassador for the Royal Opera, his award came as small surprise to the artistic community, including ROH chief executive Tony Hall, who cited Pappano's 'boundless energy', and Sir John

'The small fly in the ointment was the relative scarcity of honours for musical figures other than Pappano'

Tomlinson, currently appearing in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, who spoke of his 'admiration and respect' for Pappano 'as a fine



musician and pianist'. The small fly in the ointment was the relative scarcity of honours for other musical figures. The philanthropist Ian Stoutzker was awarded a CBE, Ronald Corp, the composer and founder of the New London Orchestra, received an OBE and an MBE went to Ralph Allwood, former precentor and director of music at Eton College and the moving spirit behind the Eton Choral Courses since their foundation in 1980. Composer John Metcalf also received an MBE.

Finally, a further appointment for Dallas Symphony Orchestra music director Jaap van Zweden, who will succeed fellow Dutchman Edo de Waart as the Hong Kong Philharmonic's music director in 2012-13. The next step in a meteoric rise that began when van Zweden was appointed the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra's youngest-ever concertmaster aged 19, the new position need not cause too much strain on the conductor's busy schedule. This year he is due to step down as director from both the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Flemish Philharmonic in Belgium so, despite a potential increase in globetrotting, he has made time to nurture both the Asian and American orchestras. Indeed, the new role lends a well-rounded international flavour to van Zweden's CV, with the opportunity to nurture the promising Hong Kong Phil as it becomes an increasingly prominent player in an expanding Asian musical market. ⑥

Specialist Classical Chart The UK's best-selling pure classical releases

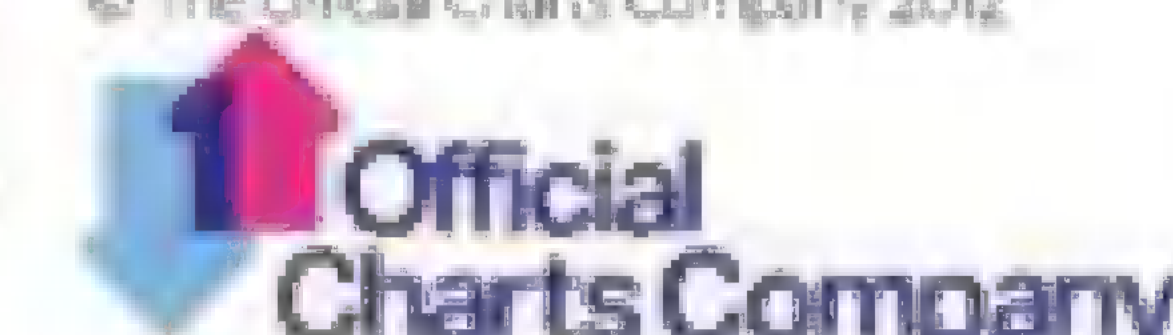
- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 (New) 'Seraph' - Trumpet Concertos
Alison Balsom EMI | 6 (New) Anthony Hopkins - 'Composer'
CBSO / Michael Seal Classic FM |
| 2 (New) Bach - Cantatas
Andreas Scholl Decca | 7 (New) Rachmaninov - Symphony No 3
RLPO / Vasily Petrenko EMI |
| 3 (1) Miloš - 'The Guitar'
Miloš Karadaglić DG | 8 (14) Schubert - Piano Sonatas D840, D850 & D894 Paul Lewis HM |
| 4 (3) New Year's Day Concert 2012
VPO / Jansons Sony Classical | 9 (New) 'French Impressions'
Joshua Bell, Jeremy Denk Sony Classical |
| 5 (2) Paul Mealor - 'A Tender Light'
Tenebrae; RPO / Nigel Short Sony Classical | 10 (Re) Liszt - Lieder
Diana Damrau Virgin Classics |



Alison Balsom's new recording, 'Seraph', enters the chart at number one

Chart for week ending January 14 (previous week's position in brackets). Visit gramophone.co.uk for weekly updates of the chart, along with reviews

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Martin Roscoe

The British pianist reflects on his epic Beethoven sonata series and argues that Dohnányi deserves a far wider audience

My last five years have, professionally, been dominated by the series of recordings of Beethoven's 35 (!) piano sonatas I have been making for Deux-Elles. Comprising nine discs in all, eight have now been recorded and three have been released so far. Together with the all-Beethoven concerts I have been giving, this has been a hugely inspiring journey. I have been playing most of these amazing masterpieces for nigh on 40 years and it's been wonderful to have the opportunity to record them.

Just overlapping with this project is the four-disc set of Dohnányi's piano music which I am recording for Hyperion. Opportunities for concert performances here are not so easy to come by, although I have occasionally managed to sneak a few pieces into mixed programmes. I have been interested in this rather neglected composer for quite some time, having recorded his piano concertos for Hyperion already as well as some of his other works years ago for the ASV label,

'Living in a place of peace and beauty is a necessary indulgence when tackling the Mount Everest of the Hammerklavier'

and I feel strongly that he deserves a much wider audience. Dohnányi was a major figure in central European music for the first half of the 20th century, having a huge career as a pianist and teacher in Budapest as well as being a prolific composer. The music is always sincere, well crafted and attractive, even if the early compositions do seem rather over-influenced by Brahms (not a bad man to follow!). Later, he certainly developed his own voice, and his highly developed sense of humour (well known from his *Variations on a Nursery Theme*) becomes more and more evident. Programming the discs has been fun, if a little tricky, as they are all extremely well filled, so providing an attractive and varied programme on each one has proved to be a difficult juggling act.

I have been recording both the Beethoven and the Dohnányi at the wonderful recording studio at Potton Hall in Suffolk, currently owned by my dear friend Jeremy Hayes, who also produces the Dohnányi discs. This has to be one of the quietest studios in the UK as we are rarely disturbed by any extraneous noises apart from the occasional bird tweeting away in response to the music going on inside! Mike George, senior producer of the BBC Philharmonic, is another old friend and he has been producing the Beethoven discs. I think it is very important to have a producer who not only has ears, but who also knows my playing inside out, so that he or she is able to get the very best out of me and recognise how hard to push me. Having fantastic personal relationships with these two guys also makes the whole process great fun and relaxing in the best possible way.



A concert with Peter Cropper and Moray Welsh at the 2011 Ribbles Valley International Piano Week



Potton Hall, 2008: with Mike George (left) and playing solo



With my sons Michael and Philip on Gowbarrow Fell, Ullswater

Different colleagues have different ways of doing things, but once we have arrived at the best possible sound by recording a few passages and making minor adjustments to microphone positions etc, I like to do a complete take of one movement or piece and then go to listen to it. I will make a few notes based on what I hear, discuss these points with the producer and then make at least one more complete take. If it is a sonata movement where organic control of the structure is a vital element, more complete takes may be necessary and desirable. After that I rely on the producer to guide me through what is still needed.

The only downside is that Suffolk is a very long way from my home in the English Lake District. Living in such an awesome and inspiring place is a bit of an indulgence maybe but, for me, tackling the metaphorical Mount Everest of, say, Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata, a place of peace and beauty is a necessary indulgence. It also enables me to enjoy hill-walking. Although my pursuit of the conquest of all the Scottish Munros has rather stalled currently (having climbed 210 out of 283), I am able to walk out of my own door and be on the local South Lakeland hills within a few minutes, which is indeed a fortunate luxury. It is also a marvellous way of keeping fit! **G**

► To read Gramophone's review of Martin Roscoe's Dohnányi, turn to page 60



Disc of the Month

Falla

Spanish Series, Vol. 1

Juanjo Mena in his new position with the BBC Philharmonic records Volume 1 of a major new Spanish series, starting with works for stage and concert hall by Manuel de Falla. The score for the ballet *The Three-cornered Hat* put Falla on the international map as a composer. *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* is among his most impressionistic and poetic works, and features the pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet.

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CHANDOS New Releases



Berio Realisations

The Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Edward Gardner perform three orchestral realisations by Luciano Berio: *Rendering*, based on unfinished symphonic sketches by Schubert, six early songs by Mahler with the baritone soloist Roderick Williams, and a clarinet sonata by Brahms with Michael Collins as soloist.

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Korngold String Sextet/ Piano Quintet

This is the second Korngold disc recorded by the Doric String Quartet. Their first Korngold release was a Critic's Choice in *Gramophone*, and *The Strad* wrote: 'This is music that requires cool heads as well as warm hearts... the Doric players reveal a rare sensitivity for the music's emotional ebb and flow'. The Quartet is joined by Kathryn Stott on piano.

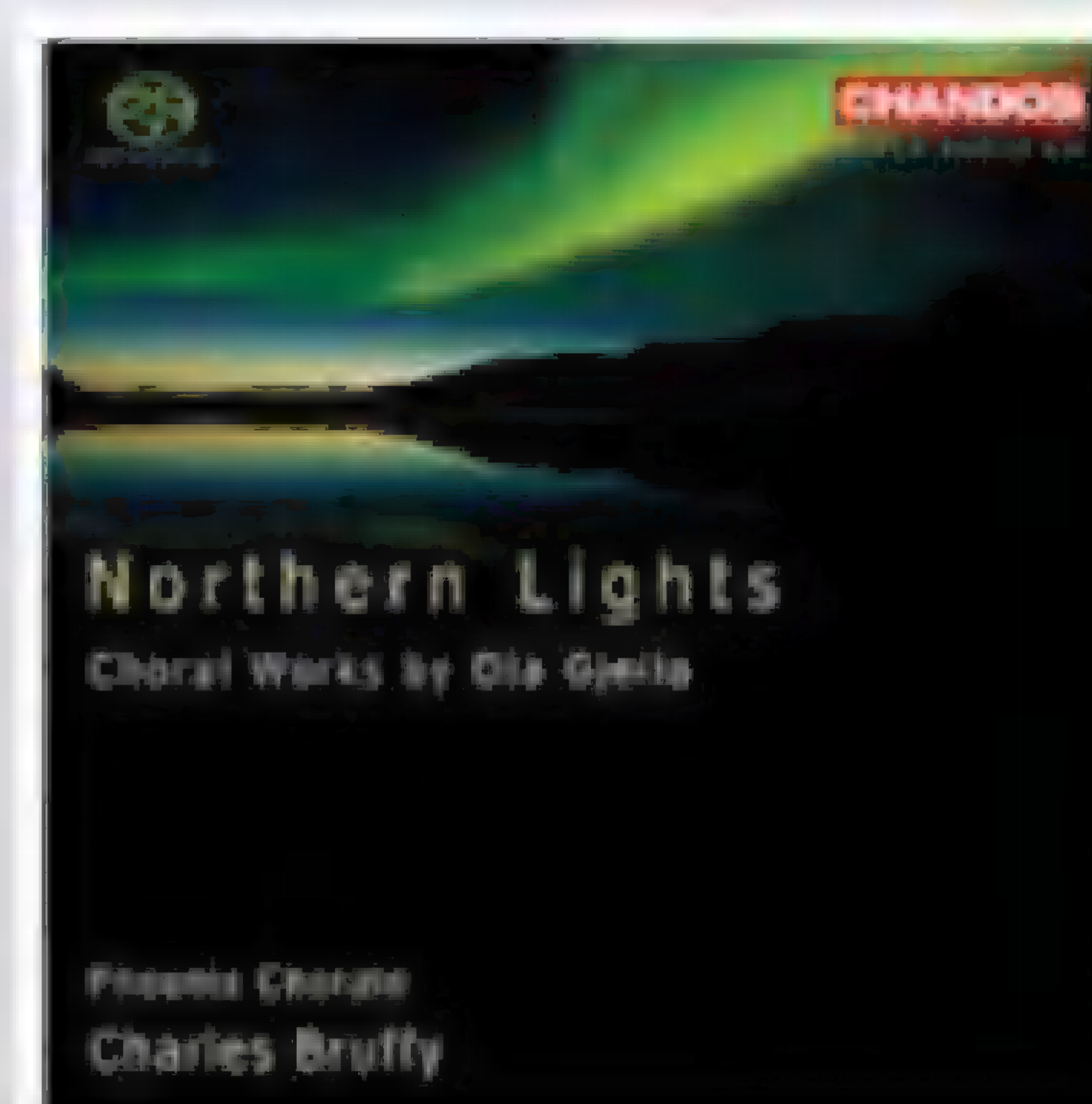
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Gjeilo Choral Works

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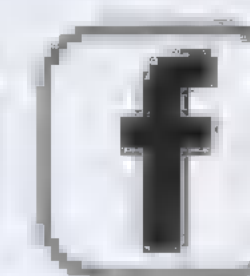


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SESSION REPORT Holst's The Coming of Christ

Work: *The Coming of Christ* (plus *Two Psalms*, *Nunc Dimittis* and 'I love my love')

Artists: Robert Hardy (narr); City of London Choir; Chamber Choir of St Paul's Girls' School; The Holst Orchestra

Conductor: Hilary Davan Wetton

Date: October 15, 2011 Venue: St Paul's Girls' School, London Engineer: Richard Bland

Producer: Matthew Dilley Session Time: 10am - 8pm Words: Andrew Stewart

Where better to make the first recording of Gustav Holst's *The Coming of Christ* than St Paul's Girls' School? Parts of the work, written as incidental music to a mystery play, were drafted at the west London independent school where the composer taught from 1905 until his death in 1934. Holst fashioned his score to lie within comfortable reach of his pupils, many of whom joined the chorus for its first performance in Canterbury Cathedral in May 1928. The piece includes music for four soloists, mixed choir, trumpet solo, piano and strings as companion and complement to poet laureate John Masefield's vibrant text.

And now, on this warm autumnal day in 2011, the Hammersmith air is once again resonating with the composer's music. Hilary Davan Wetton is beginning a productive session in the company of seasoned professionals, amateur performers and Em Marshall-Luck's EM Records to record *The Coming of Christ* and four short choral works.

Emotional investment can be hard to measure during a recording, but it registers with moving force during the eight hours required here. Conductor Davan Wetton and executive producer Marshall-Luck have an affinity with both the venue and the composer: the former was music director at St Paul's Girls' School for 15 years and remains an ardent champion of Holst's work; the latter was among Davan Wetton's students and has been a prime mover in rescuing *The Coming of Christ* from deep obscurity.

'This recording project resonates with me for so many reasons,' Davan Wetton tells me after the session. 'Returning to the school is

'This project resonates with me for many reasons. Returning to St Paul's is both lovely and strange'
- Hilary Davan Wetton

both lovely and strange!' He also refers to the wise decision by the youthful City of London Choir to hold sufficient resources in reserve to close the evening session with wholehearted full takes of Holst's unaccompanied *Nunc Dimittis* and 'I love my love'. 'I was a bit nervous about doing the *a cappella* works at the end,' Davan Wetton confides, 'but they rose to the challenge in a very splendid way.'

Earlier in the day many familiar faces arrive for work with Davan Wetton's Holst Orchestra, trumpeter Tim Hawes and leader Diana Cummings among them. The select ensemble make use of every minute of rehearsal time and are able to record *The Coming of Christ* in long takes, interrupted only once by a misbehaving mobile phone. Their job has been considerably eased by Marshall-Luck's pre-session labours. She has located performing materials for *The Coming of Christ* (buried but for the occasional outing since the work's Canterbury Cathedral premiere), delivered a successful reduced version of John Masefield's eponymous play,



1. Conductor Hilary Davan Wetton rehearses The Holst Orchestra, the City of London Choir and the Chamber Choir of St Paul's Girls' School in *The Coming of Christ*. Holst himself performed in St Paul's wood-panelled Great Hall


2, 3 & 4. Returning to St Paul's, where he taught for 15 years, was a moving experience for Davan Wetton. He was particularly pleased with the City of London Choir, who 'rose to the challenge in a very splendid way'

secured approval for its use from the author's estate and enlisted Robert Hardy to record the words once the music is safely in the can.

'I worked my way through the music library when I was at St Paul's Girls' School,' recalls Marshall-Luck. 'I came across a reference to *The Coming of Christ* in Michael Short's Holst biography, which made me want to listen to it. Of course, there was no recording. With a bit more digging, I discovered that the piece had effectively disappeared.' The search for Holst's 'lost' work gathered speed in 2006 when Marshall-Luck launched the English Music Festival. 'Hilary and the City of London Choir performed the music without words during the 2010 festival. I felt it was great but that it really needed something of the play to bind it together.' She has since edited Masfield's text into a narration for single voice, pruning its length by more than half without destroying the poet's complex metres and rhyme schemes.

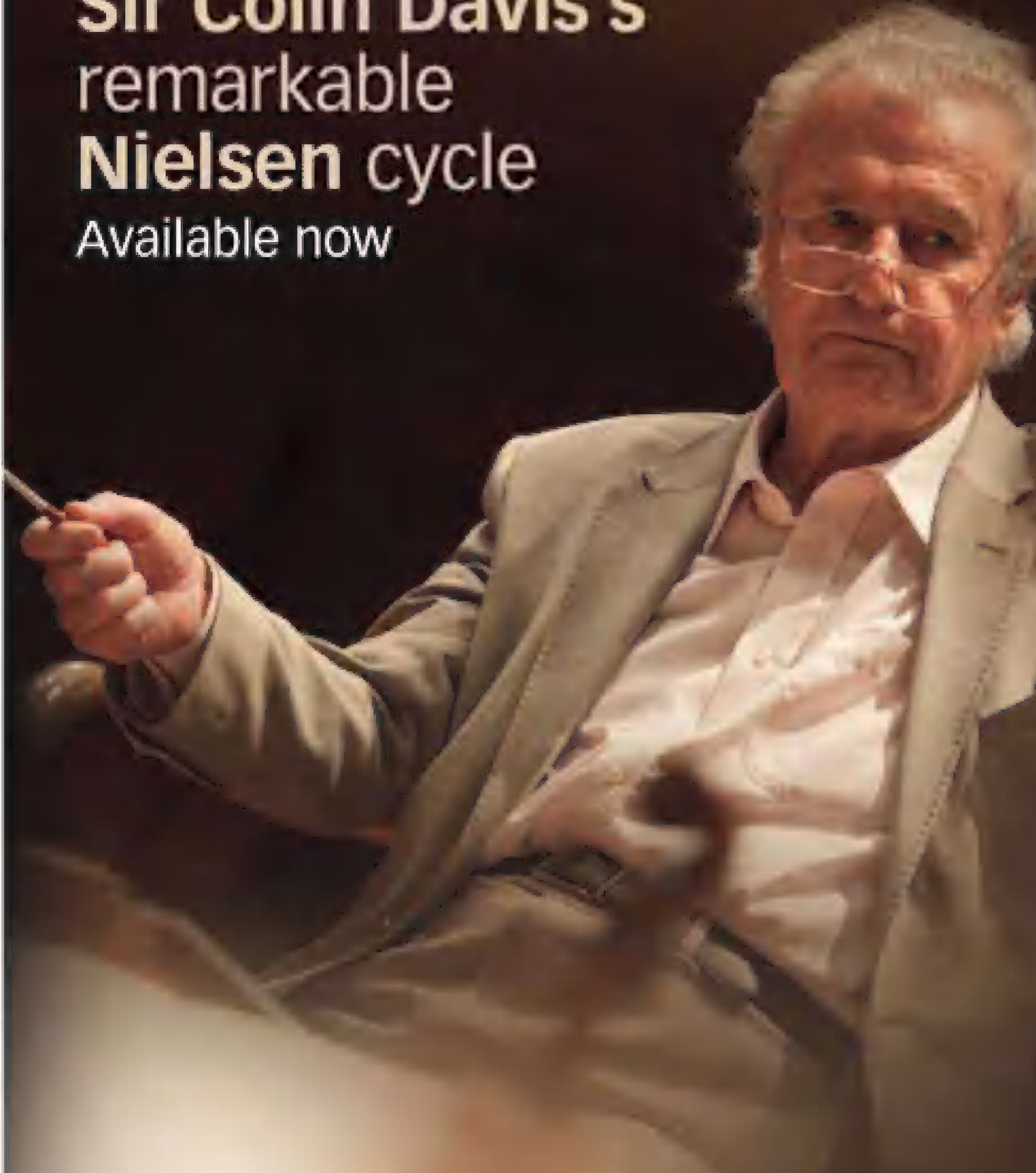
The present high mistress of St Paul's Girls' School, Clarissa Farr, responded with enthusiasm when Marshall-Luck first proposed recording *The Coming of Christ* in Holst's workplace. The school's chamber choir are taking part in the sessions, adding another personal touch to the project: their predecessors appeared in the work's first production, together with Morley College Choir. Hilary Davan Wetton pays tribute to the professional orchestral musicians and amateur singers who have given so much to Holst's cause in the space of one sunny autumn Saturday. 'They know this is first-class music,' he comments. 'The hairs were standing up on the back of my neck when we came to the *Nunc Dimittis*. And the effect of the trumpet solo, together with angelic voices singing "Glory to God" in *The Coming of Christ* was spine-chilling. I have given many performances in St Paul's Great Hall, and I have sentimental memories about the place. But, this time, it's the music that has really moved us all.' **G**

► To read Gramophone's review, turn to page 70




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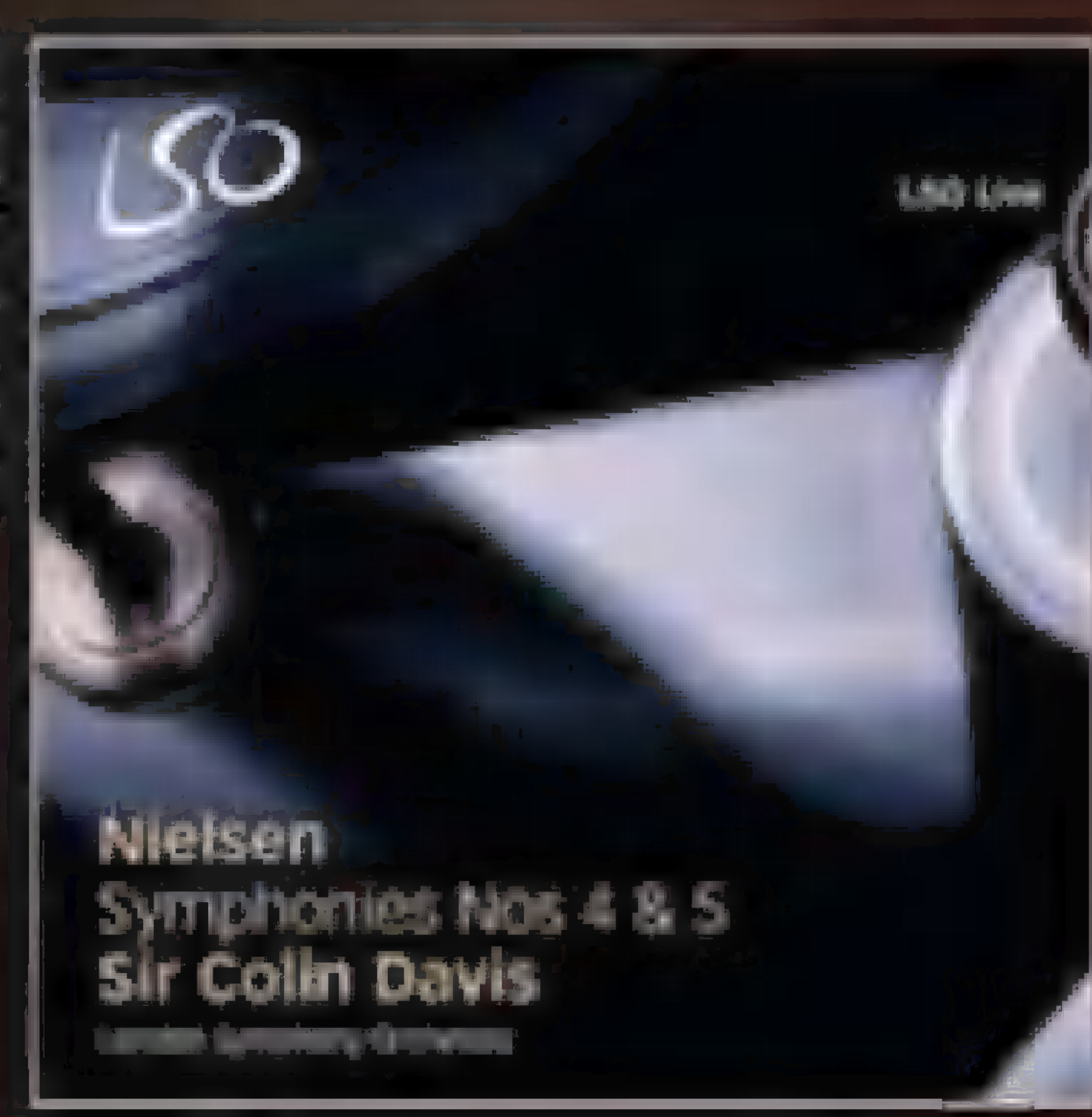
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Günter Wand

In the year of the great German conductor's centenary and 10 years after his death, Wand's life and recordings are reassessed by Michael McManus

By the time of his death, Günter Wand was for many people very much an icon. He was the best-selling living conductor in his native Germany, and his final trip to Japan in 2000, for which the entire first-class compartment of a jumbo jet was transformed into a luxurious suite for him, provided ample evidence of his 'superstar' status. Yet he was the unlikeliest and most reluctant of cult figures. He lived in a tiny village in Switzerland and his only indulgence was his collection of fine wines, notably claret. He experienced considerable privation during and after the Second World War and it was perhaps his greatest pleasure in later years to play the perfect host. Yet those final, triumphant years were in many ways highly misleading. The world remembers a frail old man who excelled in the 'core' Austro-German repertoire, eschewing Mahler but producing stunningly fine performances of the symphonic works of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms and, above all, his beloved Bruckner.


In fact Wand started out as a precocious arranger and conductor of operettas and jack-of-all-trades in a provincial opera house. In the 1930s he refused to join the Nazi party and his career suffered. Justice came after the war, when he was dramatically promoted to take charge of the musical life of Cologne. Still only in his thirties, he rapidly achieved prominence in the new Federal Republic. Its administrative centre was established in nearby Bonn and he became a friend and supporter of the founder of the new political order, Konrad Adenauer. His musical repertoire was catholic in every sense, and much of it involved working with singers. He was, by all accounts, a fine and devoted conductor of Bach's great choral pieces, and many of the earliest recordings of his work are of Austro-German choral music.

The enterprising Profil label has made some of these recordings available, including a delightful disc of Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and Schubert's *Stabat mater* in F minor in recordings from the early 1950s. Profil has also released some of the contemporary music that Wand championed: works by Baird, Braunfels and his friend BA Zimmermann; and there is a remarkable 1957 recording of Fortner's brilliant but neglected opera *Bluthochzeit* – the only recording we have of Wand the opera conductor, compelling from start to finish.

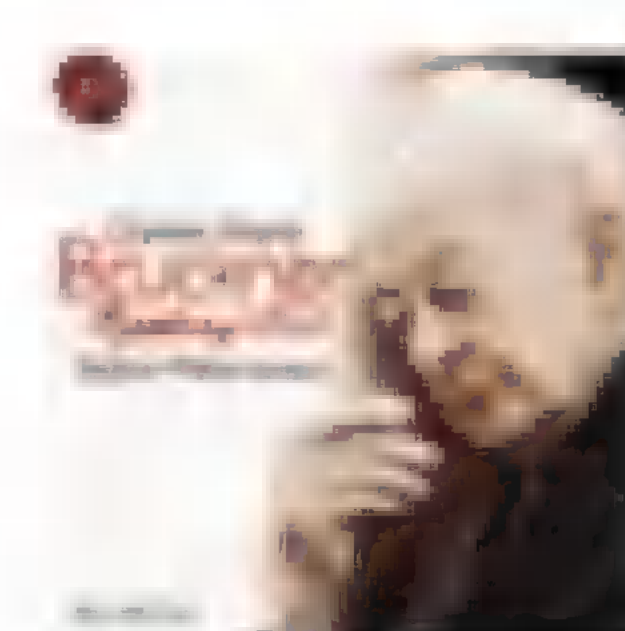
Wand and the Gürzenich Orchestra, which he led for almost three decades, also recorded 30 symphonic works together, for a subscription-only French classical music club, usually with a sound engineer but no producer. Stewart Brown at Testament has lovingly restored many of them to the catalogue – a tantalisingly almost-complete Beethoven cycle, including a *Missa solennis*, plus Schubert, Mozart and Haydn. The sound quality and playing belie the straitened circumstances in which most of the recordings were made.

Wand's elevation to superstar status effectively began when he took charge of the NDR Symphony Orchestra in Hamburg in the 1980s. Sony/BMG still has available many recordings from that time, and Profil will soon be issuing more box-sets featuring some previously unknown recordings with the NDR SO and the DSO Berlin. Concurrently with his time at the NDR SO, Wand was principal guest conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducting them in London and on short domestic tours. He forged a powerful bond, in particular with the much loved concert master Bela Dekany, who

played the role of negotiator as well as musical leader to perfection. Rehearsals were never easy, but the results could be spectacular, especially in concert performances of the late Bruckner symphonies and a remarkable studio recording of his Symphony No 8, from 1983. The 1980s also saw Wand invited to conduct in the USA for the first time; then in the 1990s, following the death of Karajan, he returned to the podium of the BPO, with electrifying effect. However famous and successful he became, he was always suffused with humility before the colossi of music. He saw himself as simply the means by which works that proved the existence of God might be brought to fruition.

His most memorable concert was in the monastery at Ottobeuren, when a performance of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony so moved the audience that they did not applaud at the end, sitting in contemplative silence and then filing out, one by one. That concert is available on Profil but it is another recording of that piece that, for me, best encapsulates this extraordinary man's art. In September 1998 he conducted his favourite programme with the BPO – Bruckner's Ninth, preceded by Schubert's Eighth Symphony, both unfinished works. The Berlin recording of the Bruckner perfectly captures this great, humble man at the peak of his unrivalled Indian summer. He regarded this piece as an *Öffnung zu Himmel* – an opening to Heaven. I hope he was right. Listening to this, I am certain he was. 

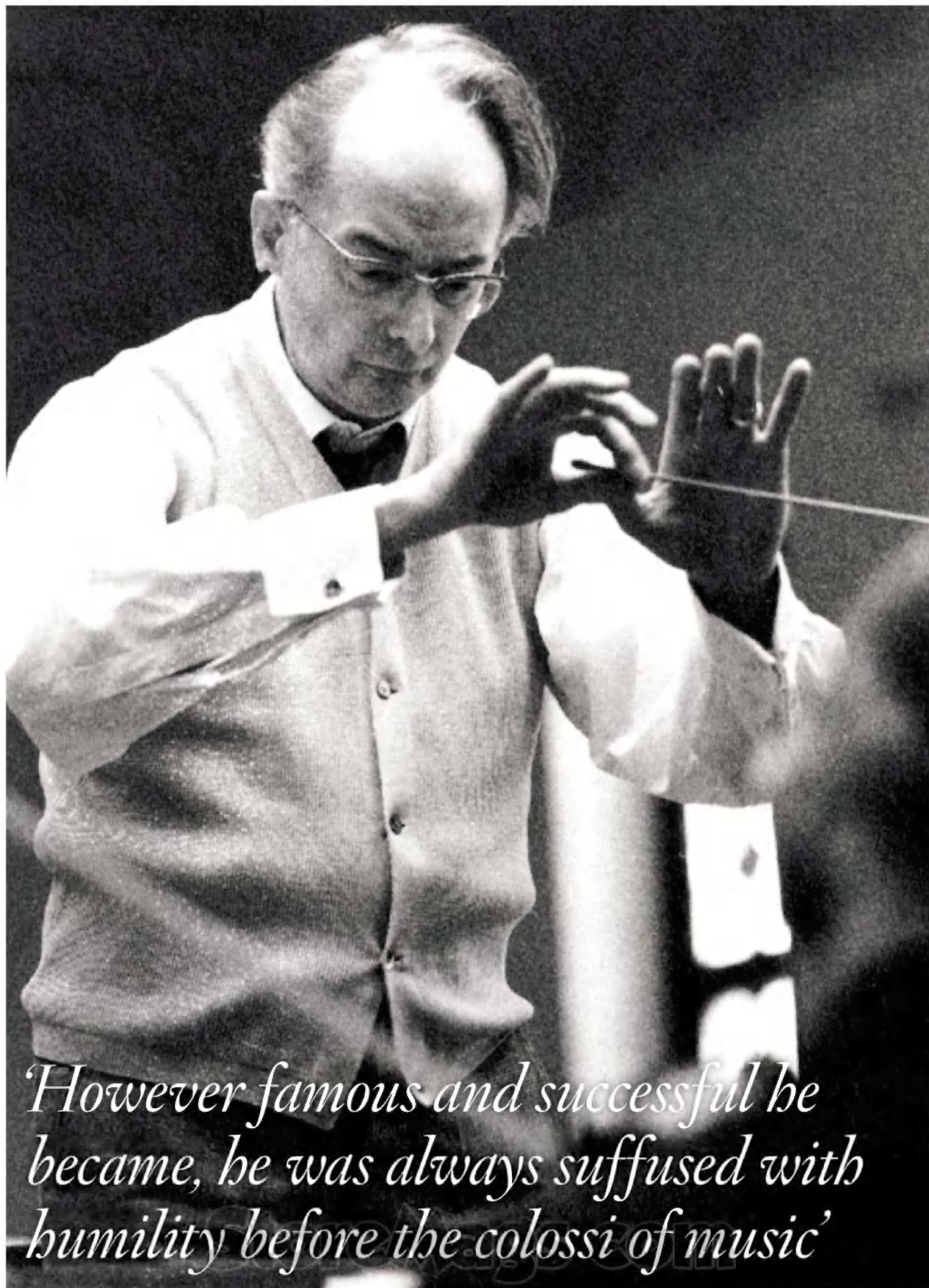
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Bruckner Symphony No 9
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Günter Wand
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DEFINING MOMENTS

- **OCTOBER 8, 1945** – *returns to Cologne*
Wand conducts his first post-war concert with the Gürzenich Orchestra. The Gürzenich building had been wrecked by Allied bombing in 1943, so this programme of Beethoven and Mozart was given in the hall of the University. Within six weeks, Wand had been put in charge of the orchestra – and of Cologne's opera, too.
- **SEPTEMBER 19–20, 1982**
Wand's inaugural concerts in Hamburg as music director of the NDR Symphony Orchestra – the beginning of a decade-long golden age. A live recording of Debussy's *Le martyre de St Sébastien* from the concert on September 20 was issued in 2000 by BMG.
- **JANUARY 19–22, 2001**
Wand's final performances with the BPO. The single work given on those nights, Bruckner's Eighth Symphony, was recorded live by BMG and won the *Gramophone* Award for Best Orchestral recording the following year, eight months after the death of the conductor at the age of 90.



'However famous and successful he became, he was always suffused with humility before the colossi of music'

Berg's Violin Concerto

AJ Goldmann speaks to *Isabelle Faust* about Berg's Requiem 'to the memory of an Angel'

Isabelle Faust ushers me into the cavernous sitting room of her Berlin apartment. On the coffee table, I spy two copies of Berg's Violin Concerto. The first is a newly published full-size facsimile of Berg's fair copy. The second is a worn pocket score with brittle pages and heavy annotations by Faust. Berg's final completed work – he wrote it as a musical eulogy for Manon Gropius, the daughter of Alma Mahler and Walter Gropius, who died, aged 18, of polio – is featured on Faust's new recording with Claudio Abbado and his Orchestra Mozart, coupled with Beethoven's Violin Concerto.

Faust explains that the Berg has long been under her fingers, although she's only now adding it to her discography. She first learnt it when she was 19 or 20 and was surprised at how naturally it came to her. 'It attracted my emotions and immediately woke up my intellect. I think whenever you play this piece, it jumps at the audience,' she says. Faust opens her facsimile copy and peers inside with evident wonder. In Berg's elegant and careful handwriting, you can visually decipher the music. 'In the beginning, you can already hear the waves. It's almost calligraphic.'

That Berg's Violin Concerto is among the most-performed pieces of the 20th-century repertoire owes something to the tonal hints Berg strews about his 12-tone composition. 'As he builds his

'You can't just learn your part and think you're well prepared. You need to know exactly what to listen for'

tone row up in thirds, our ears, which are used to triadic listening, think, "Ah, we have tonality here". But Berg never uses the triads with a cadential function,' she explains.

At the same time, Berg often harks back to earlier musical traditions, incorporating the Bach chorale 'Es ist genug!' into the second movement. It's a clever fit, because the chorale's opening notes are identical to the three final whole-tone steps of Berg's row. That triad, long considered forbidden in music for its satanic ring, gives, says Faust, 'the whole chorale a kind of flying, vague atmosphere'.

Berg's ability to transition and transform his musical material is a miraculous sleight of hand. 'There's this one beautiful link,' says Faust. 'He goes from 3/8 to 4/8 to 6/8 to transition into the *Allegretto*. It's very cleverly done. If you're a composer who prepares things like this, then your musicians shouldn't have any problem following it.'




Isabelle Faust: emotionally attracted to Berg's valedictory Violin Concerto

This is a work that demands both sensitivity and abandon. 'You need to be careful with balance but sometimes the soloist has to drown in the orchestra or completely join in. I'm thinking of the places where the violin needs to scream for her life, for example at the big climax of the second movement, before the chorale, which is comparable with the death-cry of Lulu.'

Faust is keen to make the case for putting the Berg and Beethoven side by side on a recording: 'In both these concertos, the violin doesn't have an accompanying role but rather a decorative one. The orchestral part is just as important as the solo violin.' For this reason, Faust says both concertos require an in-depth knowledge of the full score. 'You can't just learn your part and think you're well prepared. You need to know exactly what to listen for. You need to know when the orchestra gives you the melody and when they take it over.'

She points to the climactic chord at the end of the *Allegro* in the Berg. 'This chord has nine of the 12 tones. And Berg leaves the last three for the solo violin. The first note of the chorale is in the violin. Then we have a chord of seven of the 12, and two chorale notes in the violin. The row is decomposing and the chorale is coming out of them. He just does it so systematically. If you go into detail, you find all these cross connections. You can find every note connected to the row or to different themes. No note appears without a reason or just because it sounds nice. Everything is so integrated, so connected, which makes all the transitions easy.'

She pauses for a moment and reconsiders what she's just told me. 'Or at least possible. Nothing in this concerto is easy.' 

► To read Gramophone's review, turn to page 40



The historical view

Alex Ross

The Rest is Noise (2007)

'In a way, 12-tone composition gave Berg the best of both worlds. It imposed discipline on an unruly spirit, and, at the same time, it allowed for the smuggling in of forbidden pleasures. The game reached its zenith in the Violin Concerto.'

Paul Griffiths

New York Times (May 16, 2004)

'Berg builds the instrument up from its basics...and leads it on a journey of self-exploration toward transcendence. Caught at a moment when its long supremacy in Western music seems to be ending, the violin sings itself out of existence, with a voice far beyond the human in purity and range.'

Theodor W Adorno

Alban Berg: Master of the Smallest Link (1968)

'[It] was written very quickly; the often noted stylistic lucidity and clarification, which secured the work its popularity, has something to do with the pressures of composing on commission, out of which he made a virtue of a creative process at once less laborious and less inhibited.'

QUIZ



I have served as inspiration on the small screen

Who am I?

Pit your wits against Gramophone

My past is circumspect but, for the purposes of the present exercise, I'm large and imposing, though in other (different) incarnations I have been marked out by my physical modesty.

Despite that, I can appear a lethargic soul. If you tried to broach my lines of defence, I might initially respond with the simple plea that you *lasst mich schlafen!*

I caused my creator endless problems when I first appeared. Parts of my body were shipped to the wrong 'B'. Precisely the same confusion of destinations beset Chief Superintendent Strange. Remember him?

Also on the small screen, Seattle psychiatrist Niles Crane named his kite after me.

Musically, I require a degree of vocal art to be brought to life, but some heavy blowing too. I tend to get stuck on a descending perfect fourth (and have other scales about my person, too).

When I eventually arrived in the right 'B', I'd come all the way from London – from a small firm based in Milton Street, Wandsworth: Richard Keene and Co.



I share a Strange confusion

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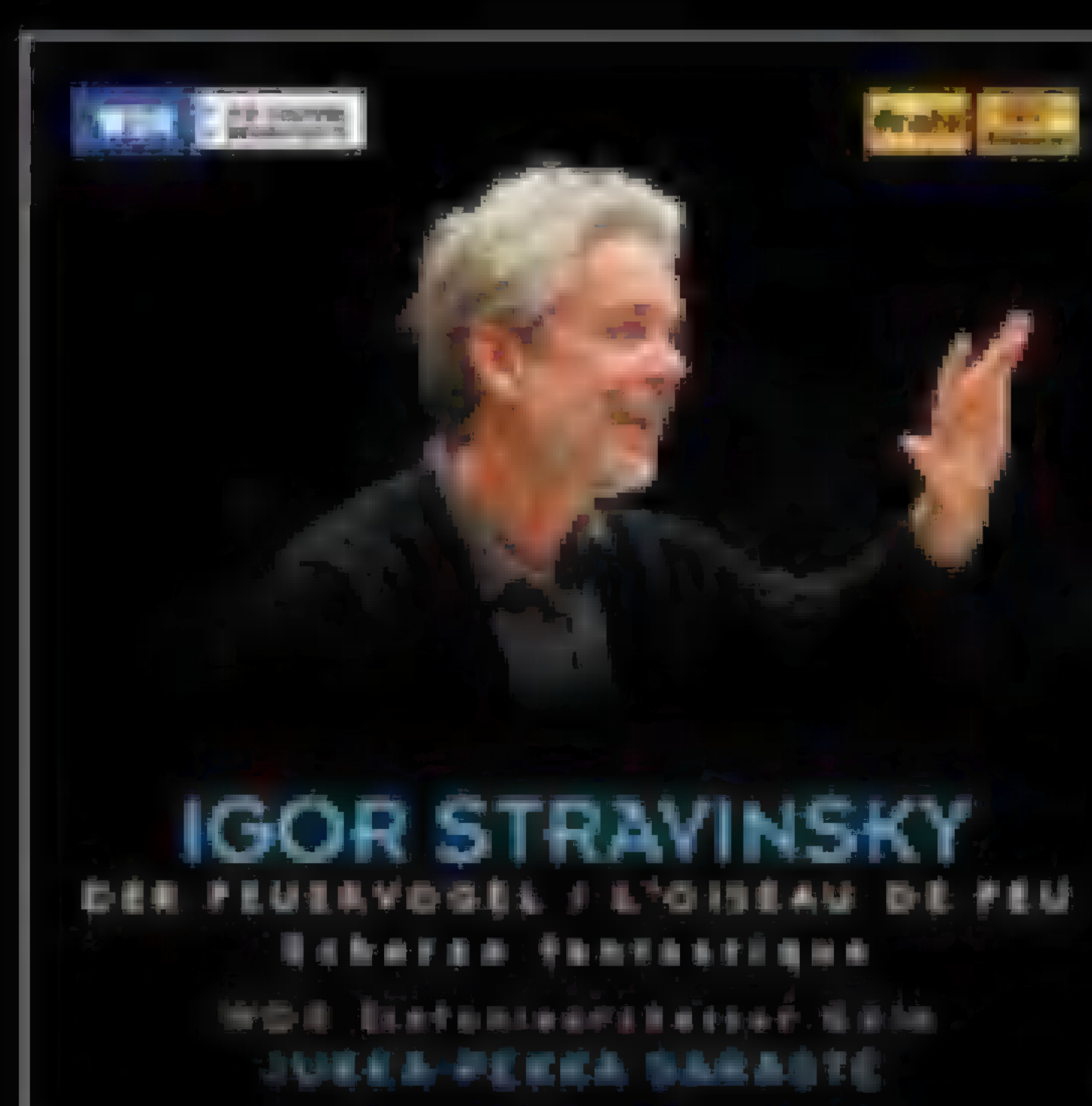
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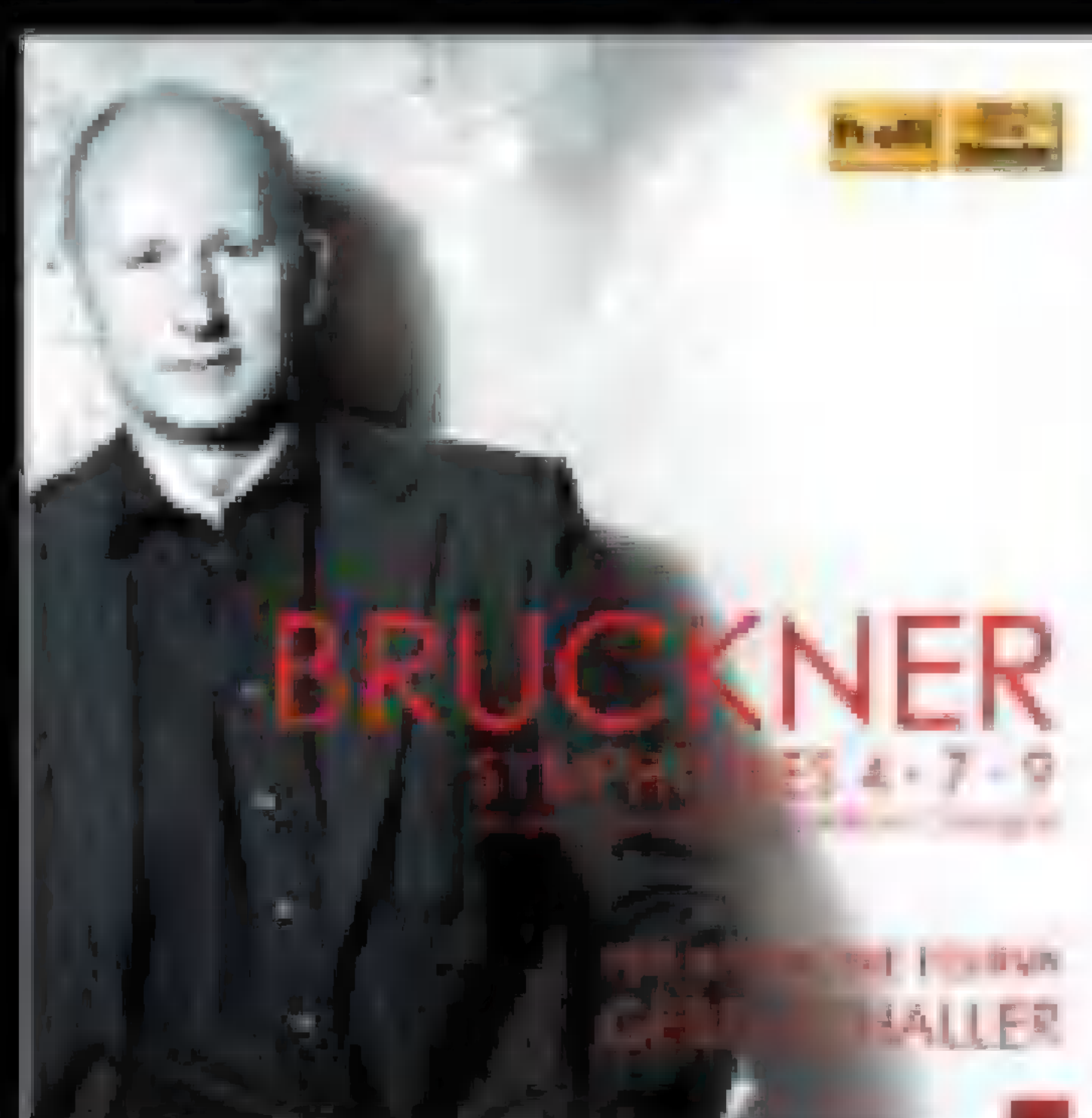
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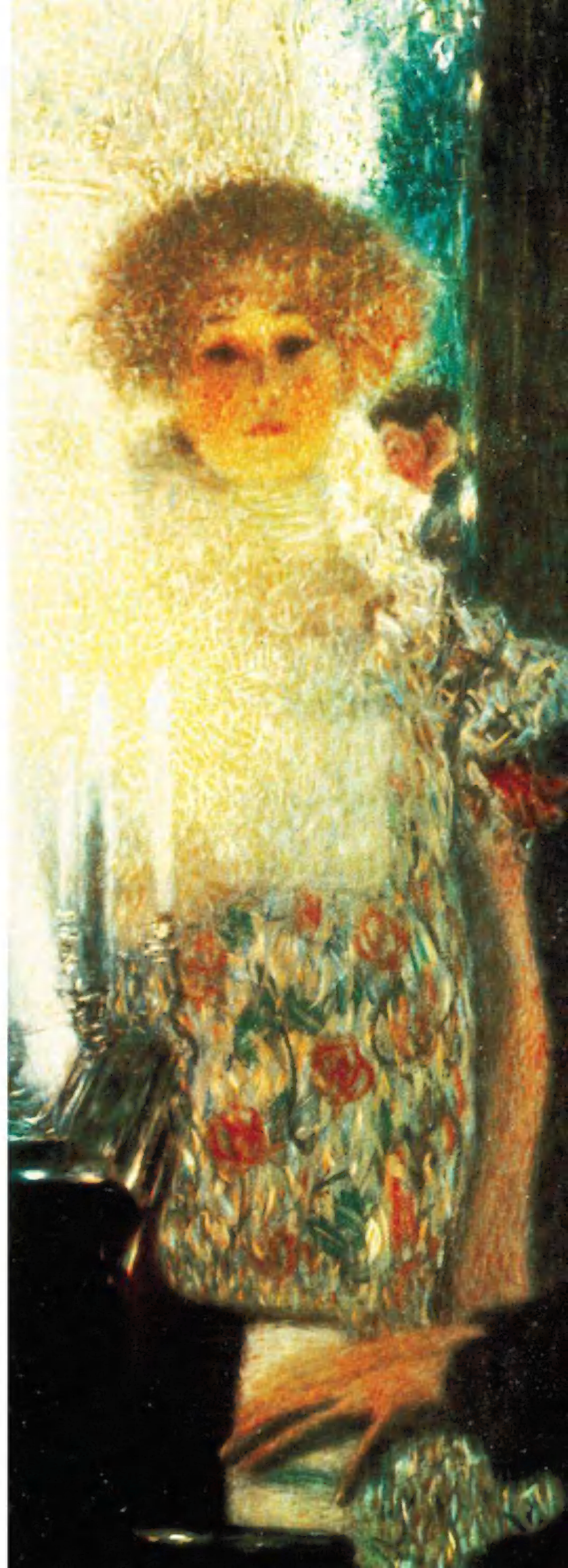
'A RICH POSSESSION BUT FAR FAIRER HOPES'

In his final year, Schubert produced music of astounding genius, hinting at the great works that surely would have followed, writes Richard Wigmore

For that passionate Schubertian Benjamin Britten the period of 13 months between the completion of *Winterreise* in (probably) late October 1827 and the composer's death in November 1828 was the most miraculous 'year' in the history of music. There is competition, of course. Many Mozart lovers would cite 1791, which began with the B flat Piano Concerto, K595, and continued, via *The Magic Flute* and the Clarinet Concerto, to the unfinished Requiem – and all in a year when Haydn was producing four of his greatest symphonies, Nos 93-96, in London. Hindsight has imbued both 1791 and 1828 with a romantic-tragic aura and ascribed to the frantic activity of both composers a sixth sense that time was somehow running out. Granted, neither was physically robust. Schubert had suffered from uncertain health since contracting syphilis in the winter of 1822-23. But until the illnesses of their final weeks, neither composer could have suspected that death was imminent. The wistful melancholy of the Clarinet Concerto and Schubert's B flat Piano Sonata should not be sentimentalised into a conscious leave-taking. Nor, perhaps, should the parallels between the two composers be pressed too far. As Alfred Brendel puts it, 'Mozart lived his life and arrived at a kind of late style. Schubert, on the contrary, was in the middle of a tremendous development when he died.'

'Who can do anything after Beethoven?' Schubert once asked a friend. A generation later those sentiments were echoed by Brahms as he grappled with his First Symphony. ▶

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANG-IMAGES/ERIC LESSING





Storemags

Beethoven's mighty example remained both an inspiration and an awesome challenge for any 19th-century composer writing within the sonata tradition. Yet the magnificent series of instrumental works Schubert produced after the master's death in March 1827, beginning with the two piano trios, suggests that the self-effacing former schoolteacher who never dared approach Beethoven in his lifetime (though he was a pall-bearer at his funeral) was eager to establish himself as his successor: one clue, surely, to a surge of creative energy phenomenal even by Schubert's standards.

With a nod to Britten, it is tempting to locate the start of Schubert's torrential final phase to late autumn 1827. His staunchest friend, Josef von Spaun, remarked on Schubert's 'gloomy' mood while composing *Winterreise*, and even claimed that work on the songs hastened the composer's death. Fragmentary evidence (which is all the Schubert biographer has to work on) suggests that at this time he was suffering more than usual from nausea and headaches, perhaps exacerbated by bouts of heavy drinking. But lest we draw too close a connection between life and art – between what TS Eliot called 'the man who suffers and the mind

never noted for his reliability or punctuality, he seems to have led an active social life, dominated by musical parties and regular Saturday evening readings at Schober's house. Having failed as a professional actor, Schober relished declaiming to a captive audience plays, short stories and poems, including Heinrich Heine's newly published *Reisebilder*, then all the rage in German literary circles.

In January the publisher Tobias Haslinger advertised the first 12 songs of *Winterreise*, citing the composer's 'warm feeling' and 'bold imagination'. A review in the *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunst, Literatur, Theater und Mode* praised the songs as 'well made and beautiful' – a surprising verdict, perhaps, considering how baffled Schubert's friends were when he sang through the first part of *Winterreise* at Schober's the previous year.

In February, Schubert was approached by two German publishers, Schott of Mainz and Probst of Leipzig, asking what works he might have to offer them. It is revealing of Schubert's new ambition to rival Beethoven that his reply stressed large-scale instrumental works, including the quartets in D minor and G major, and the E flat Piano Trio.

Schwind's painting of Schubert accompanying Vogl at one of Spaun's musical evenings shows a portrait of the Countess Esterházy looking down on proceedings, muse-like

'THE ROMANTIC MYTH OF SCHUBERT'S NEGLECT AND ISOLATION FROM THE VIENNESE MUSICAL MAINSTREAM DIES HARD'

that creates' – it is worth remembering that virtually contemporary with the song-cycle of existential despair are the vigorous, life-affirming piano trios. Indeed, of all the larger instrumental works of his last years, the B flat Trio, D898, comes closest to the familiar image of the blithe, companionable, *echt*-Viennese Schubert. In December 1827 came the second set of Impromptus, D935, more extrovert and 'popular' in tone than the earlier set (D899); and the C major Fantasie for violin and piano, D934, an unlikely virtuoso showpiece from this least flamboyant of composers.

The romantic myth of Schubert's neglect and isolation from the Viennese musical mainstream dies hard. With the championship of the operatic baritone Johann Michael Vogl, his fame as a song composer had grown rapidly since the publication of *Erkönig* as Op 1 in 1821. His songs, partsongs, dances and other short piano pieces were in healthy demand among publishers. In 1827 he had been elected to the committee of the Vienna Philharmonic Society. By then, his social circle included professional musicians, notably the Bohemian pianist Karl Maria von Bocklet, as well as friends such as Spaun, the rich dilettante Franz von Schober (generous, but also fickle and egocentric), the painter Moritz von Schwind and the dramatist Eduard von Bauernfeld. Schubert wrote appreciatively to another musician friend, the pianist and composer Anselm Hüttenbrenner, of a public performance of a 'new trio' (probably the B flat) in the hall of the Philharmonic Society on December 26, 1827, by Bocklet, plus the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh and the cellist Josef Linke – both members of the famed Schuppanzigh Quartet which had given the first performances of the late Beethoven quartets and (in 1824) of Schubert's own A minor Quartet, D804.

Schubert had every reason to be feeling optimistic in the early months of 1828. While he doubtless suffered from the headaches and fits of nausea that had afflicted him intermittently since 1823, until August neither he nor any of his friends mentioned ill health; and, although he was

Although dealings with both publishers were to prove frustrating (the quartets were rejected, and Probst eventually accepted the trio for a lower fee than Schubert had requested), their interest confirms his growing reputation outside Vienna.

Meanwhile, Schubert had begun to plan for a benefit concert in the Philharmonic Society hall entirely devoted to his own music, exactly as Beethoven had done on several occasions: further testimony to the young composer's confidence that he was ready to assume Beethoven's mantle. Held on March 26, the anniversary of Beethoven's death, the concert was the greatest public success of Schubert's whole career, bringing him a handsome profit of 800 florins, even if critical attention was deflected by the presence in Vienna of Nicolò Paganini. 'I shall never forget how glorious it was,' wrote one of Schubert's friends in his diary. 'Enormous applause. Good receipts.' Another friend noted: 'Everyone was lost in a frenzy of admiration and rapture.' The concert's centrepiece was the E flat Trio, surrounded by songs and other vocal works, including the newly composed *Auf dem Strom* (D943) for tenor, horn and piano. Exploiting the horn's elegiac and heroic associations, this noble scena is Schubert's tribute to Beethoven's memory, enhanced by an almost verbatim quotation from the *Eroica* Symphony's *Marcia funebre*.

CONFESSIONAL LONGING: THE F MINOR FANTASIE

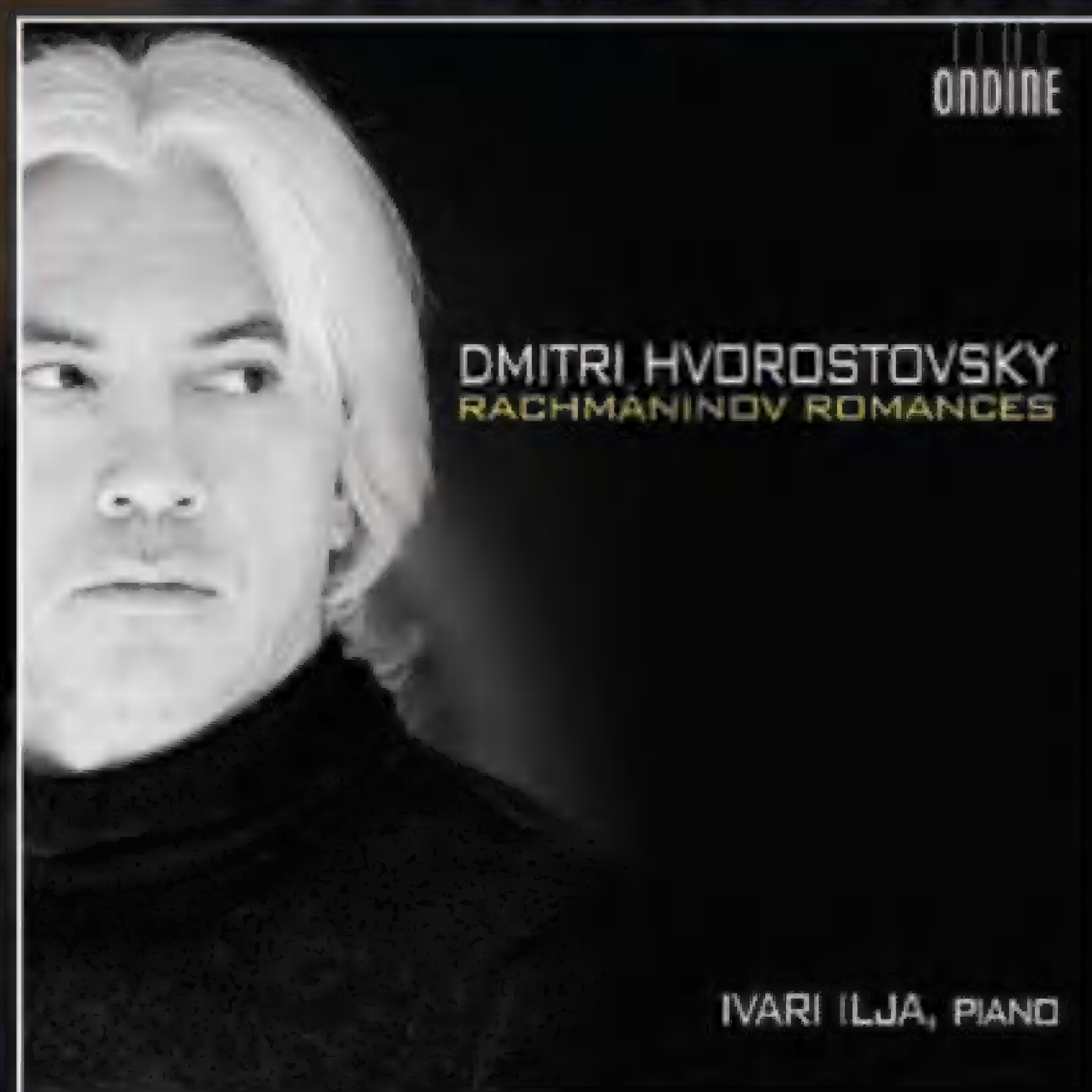
By the time of his triumphant benefit concert Schubert had virtually completed what some would nominate as the greatest of all works for piano duet: the F minor Fantasie, D940 – music that combines an intensely personal, confessional tone with a cyclic structure of revolutionary originality. The four sections, played without a break, are fertilised, directly or obliquely, by the melancholy opening tune, suffused with *echt*-Schubertian *Sehnsucht* ('longing'), and a grimly implacable march theme that, in the finale, spawns a cataclysmic fugal outburst. Like so much of Schubert's music, the opening also suggests a narrative: ▶



storemags

Dmitri Hvorostovsky

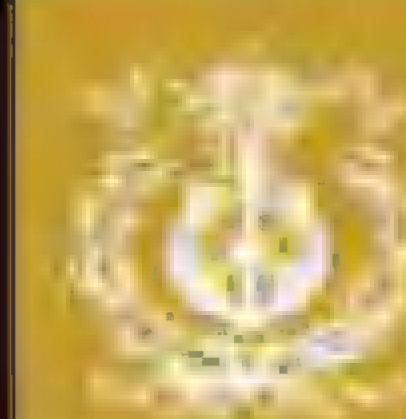
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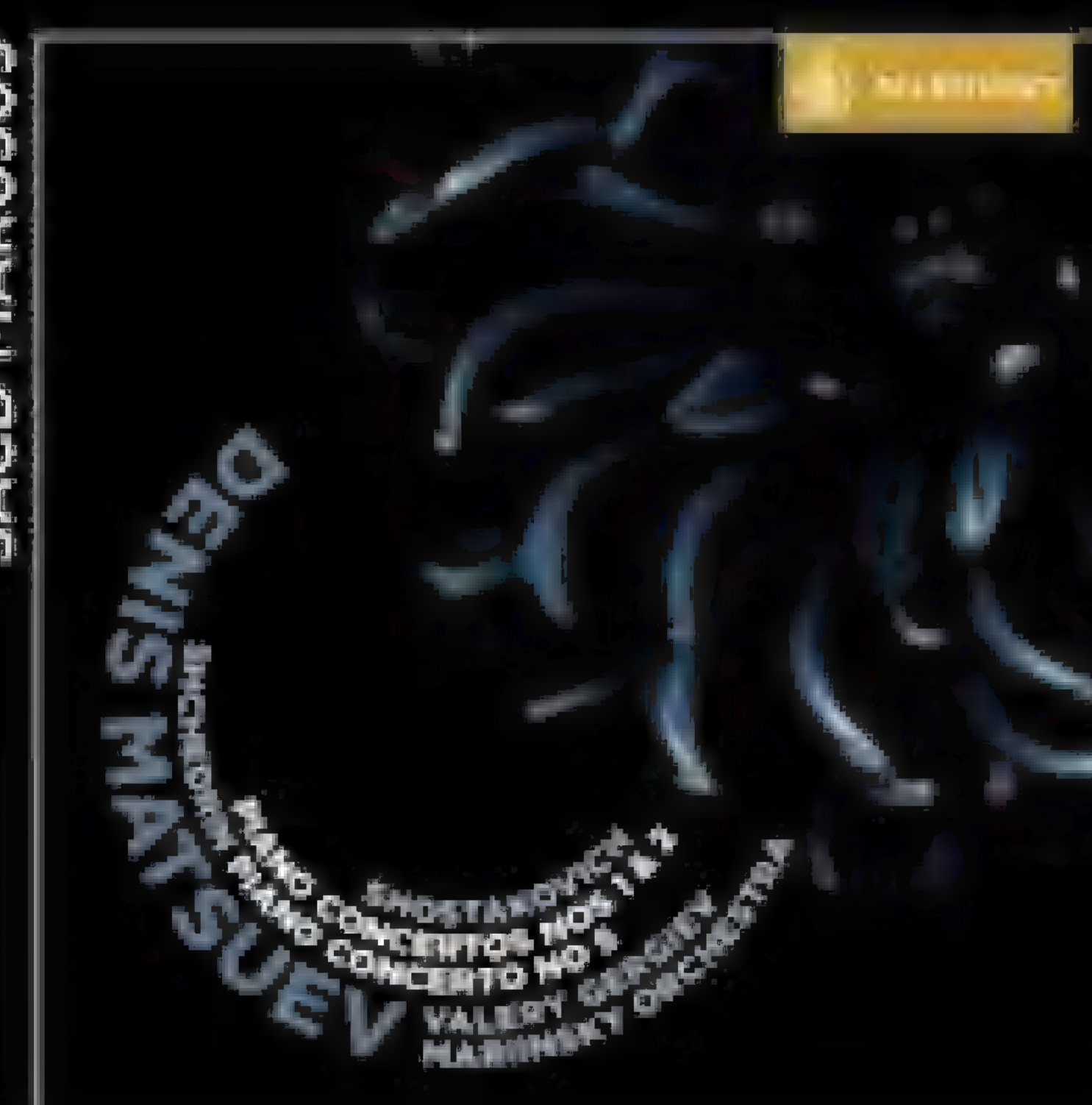
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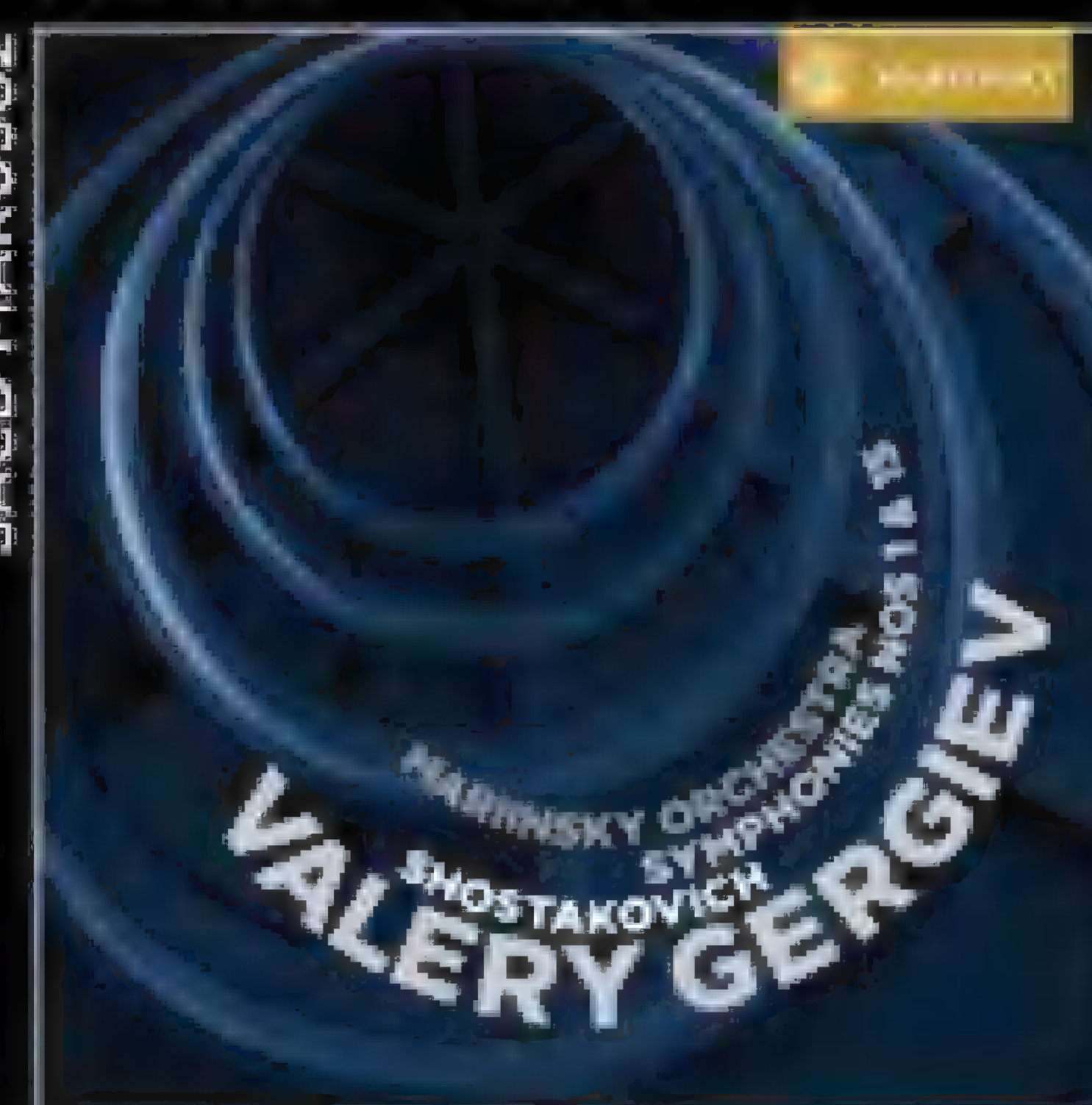


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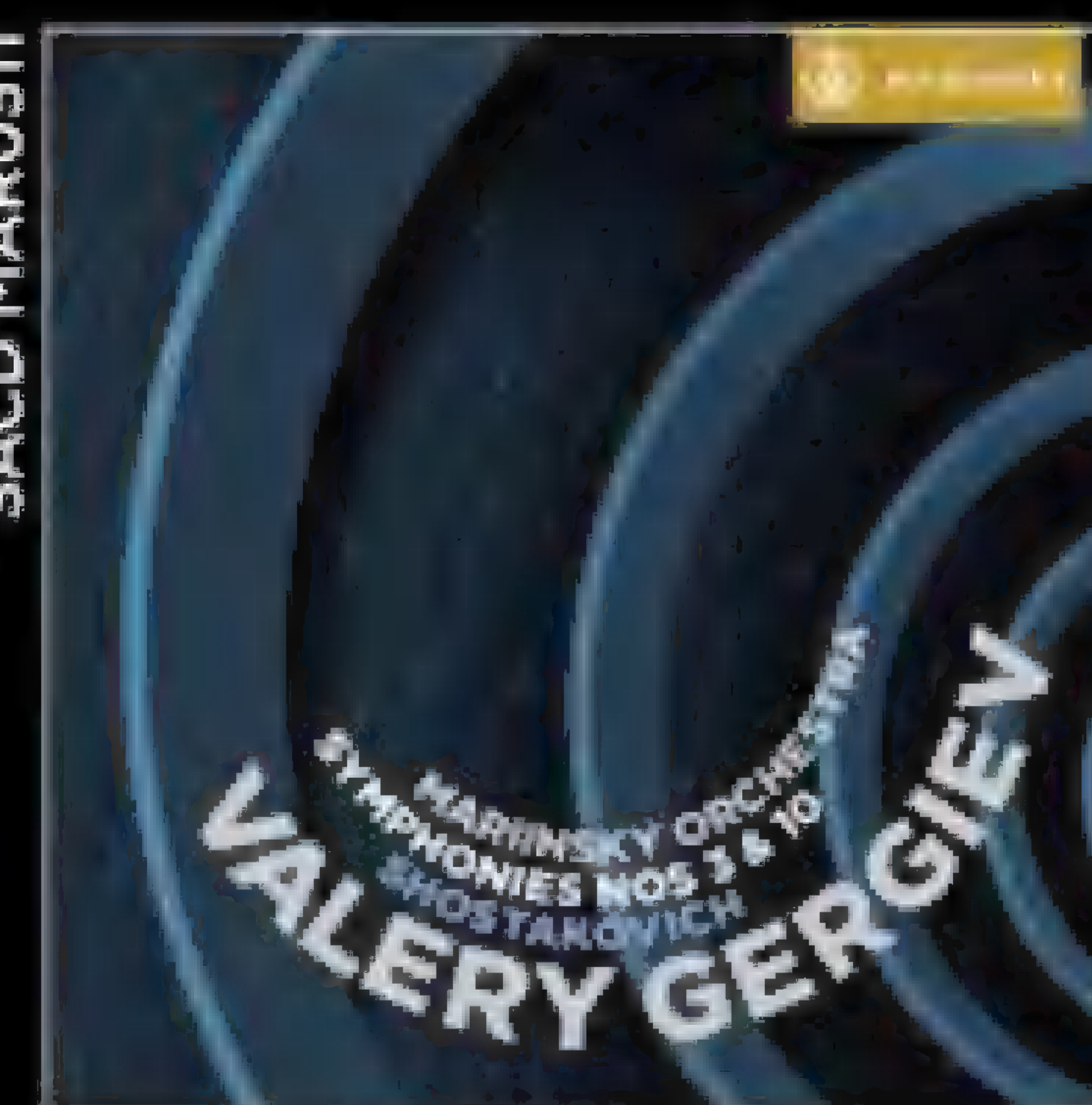
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a lone figure trudging across a landscape, as in *Winterreise* or the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich.

Pianists have observed how Schubert's keyboard works, whether for two or four hands, so often conjure other sound worlds. As Imogen Cooper tells me, the *Fantasie* often evokes, for her, a string quartet or quintet, even at times a male-voice choir. At the centre of the slow movement is a ravishing colloquy for the two players, an operatic love duet by other means: a reminder, too, that Schubert dedicated the *Fantasie* to Countess Caroline Esterházy. In the summer of 1824 Schubert had played duets with Caroline when employed as music tutor at the Esterházys' country estate in Zseliz. According to his friends, he was deeply in love with the beautiful young countess; and in the famous Moritz von Schwind painting *Ein Schubert-Abend bei Josef von Spaun* (see page 25), her portrait looks down, like a muse. It is hardly fanciful to hear in the yearning love duet an idealised expression of a relationship which social differences alone made impossible. Another great Schubertian, Mitsuko Uchida, reveals to me her doubts as to whether Caroline could actually have played the *Fantasie* ('even on a Graf piano of 1820 it's bloody difficult!'). But she also notes how in much of Schubert's four-hand music – including this *Fantasie* and the works written in Zseliz – the left hand of the *primo* part and the right hand of the *secondo* brush each other. 'The fingers constantly touch. That is *Sehnsucht*!'

Schubert and the aspiring young composer Franz Lachner (who later became a distinguished conductor) played the F minor *Fantasie* to Bauernfeld in May 1828. Bauernfeld's laconic verdict ('wunderbar') brooks no disagreement. Earlier that same evening Schubert, smitten with Paganini fever ('I have heard an angel sing,' he wrote to Hüttenbrenner), had taken Bauernfeld to hear the violinist, insisting on paying for his ticket. When his friend protested, Schubert retorted that he had 'piles of money', doubtless as a result of his benefit concert. Bauernfeld would later recall the bohemian attitude to finances among the Schubertian inner circle (Bauernfeld himself, Schubert and Schwind): 'Whoever was flush at the time paid... Now it happened that from time to time two had no money, and the third – not a penny! Naturally, of the three of us it was Schubert who played the role of Croesus, and who at times used to be rolling in money.' Far from being the perpetual pauper of romantic myth, Schubert earned a decent, if erratic, income from publications, teaching, dedications, and performances in Viennese salons; and 1828 seems to have been one of his most lucrative years. Yet even more than Mozart, he was unwilling or unable to control his finances, always happier to spend on himself and his friends than look to the morrow – though as a syphilitic he would have known that he was unlikely to reach middle (let alone old) age.

INVOKING THE SUBLIME

In April 1828 Schubert drafted several settings of the poet Ludwig Rellstab, two of which ('Liebesbotschaft' and 'Frühlingssehnsucht') would appear in the posthumously published *Schwanengesang* anthology. Then in May he wrote the *Drei Klavierstücke*, D946, impromptus in all but name, the first of which, in the 'extreme' key of E flat minor, quotes 'Comfort ye' from *Messiah*: testimony, along with the contemporaneous cantata *Mirjam's Siegesgesang*, D942, to Schubert's Handelian enthusiasm after he had acquired scores of the oratorios. From the same month date two



'THE MELANCHOLY OPENING TUNE OF THE FANTASIE IN F MINOR IS SUFFUSED WITH ECHT-SCHUBERTIAN SEHNSUCHT'

contrasting masterpieces for piano duet, the volcanic A minor Allegro, D947, known under the publisher's title *Lebensstürme*, and the dulcet Rondo in A, D951.

Schubert the composer of friendship and Schubert the heir to Beethoven commingle in the Mass in E flat, written in June and July at the behest of his schoolfriend Michael Leiternmayer, organist of the Dreifaltigkeitskirche (Holy Trinity Church) in the suburb of Alsergrund. Once something of a Cinderella among the great works of Schubert's final year, the Mass is now acknowledged as a powerful and disquieting masterpiece that marries liturgical grandeur with Schubert's own subjective romantic feeling. Inspired, perhaps, by the example of Beethoven's *Missa solennis*, the Mass invokes the sublime – though when I talk to conductor Roger Norrington, his view is that its melodic atmosphere owes more to Mozart than to Beethoven. 'It's a delightful, sometimes awe-inspiring mixture of the traditional and the wildly inventive, with novel orchestral sonorities strongly coloured by the trombones, which Schubert had used with such originality in the *Unfinished* and *Great* symphonies. Brahms picked up a lot from the E flat Mass in his Requiem.'

Schubert's religious beliefs have provoked almost as much speculation as his sexuality. His parents, like most of their class and generation, were orthodox, God-fearing Catholics, and raised their children in an atmosphere of strict piety. By 1814, when he wrote his first Mass, he evidently distrusted a Church that reserved salvation for its adherents alone, and left out the words 'Et in unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam' from the *Credo*, as he would in all his later Masses; and there are other significant omissions elsewhere, including the reference to the resurrection of the dead in both the E flat Mass and its predecessor in A flat. In adulthood, Schubert's religious outlook seems to have embraced elements of humanism, pantheism and Romantic Neoplatonism, influenced by his first, ecstatic encounter with the poetry of Goethe and by friends such as the saturnine poet Johann Mayrhofer, for whom an idealised ancient Greece was a refuge from the oppressive reality of Metternich's Vienna. What is incontrovertible is that, like so many artists in the era of Romanticism, Schubert ►

For Imogen Cooper, a champion of Schubert, the F minor *Fantasie* evokes sound worlds beyond that of the piano

found the old theological certainties inadequate. At times he tended towards agnosticism. But ultimately he seems to have retained a Christian-humanist belief in a benevolent deity, and in the presence of the divine in man.

Stylistically the E flat Mass is heterodox, ranging from the pastoral lilt of the *Kyrie* and the exquisite 'Et incarnatus est' (fashioned as a round for two tenors and soprano), to the gargantuan fugues that close the *Gloria* and *Credo*: Handelian in inspiration, but twice the length of any Handel fugue. The apocalyptic, harmonically visionary *Sanctus* is a musical counterpart of the molten canvases of Turner and late Goya, while the 'Domine Deus' and the *Agnus Dei* are unprecedented in their violent intensity, as if Schubert is

has partnered countless tenors and baritones in *Schwanengesang*, he confesses that 'Abschied' is the hardest of all to play. 'You're on your horse, and there are those constant huge jumps in the right hand – though playing it on a fortepiano of Schubert's period you can see that the composer intended the effect to be less smooth than modern players are tempted to make it.'

If the Rellstab settings invest familiar song types with new resonances, the Heine songs are unprecedented in their claustrophobic intensity and power of suggestion. Attracted by the pithiness and emotional directness of this quintessential poet of Romantic disenchantment, Schubert chose six poems from a sequence in Heine's *Reisebilder*

'WHAT IS INCONTROVERTIBLE IS THAT SCHUBERT FOUND THE OLD THEOLOGICAL CERTAINTIES TO BE INADEQUATE'

evoking not only Christ's Passion but also the catastrophe of his syphilitic illness. The baleful chant motif of the *Agnus Dei* recalls the C sharp minor Fugue in the first book of Bach's '48'. Its personal significance for Schubert is reinforced by its appearance in the terrifying Heine song 'Der Doppelgänger'. Consolation comes with the gently tolling 'Dona nobis pacem'; then, unliturgically but with shattering effect, the anguished music of the *Agnus Dei* returns, an idea surely prompted by Beethoven's *Missa solennis*. The Mass dies away in resignation. Schubert's vision of peace remains to the end uneasy and shadowed in doubt.

SWANSONG

In 1825 Schubert had spent the holiday of his lifetime amid the mountains of Upper Austria. Three summers later he hoped to replicate the experience. But his finances were again shaky, perhaps partly because of expenses incurred by his consultations with the court physician Dr Ernst Rinna. After completing the E flat Mass he returned to the Rellstab songs begun in April, adding to them six Heine settings to create what Spaun dubbed a 'garland' of 13 songs to be dedicated to his friends. Only after his death did Haslinger issue the songs under the commercially canny title *Schwanengesang*, throwing in the Johann Gabriel Seidl setting 'Die Taubenpost' to avoid the unlucky 13. Whereas the Heine songs possess a certain unity, the seven Rellstab settings have no connecting thread beyond the archetypal Romantic theme of the distant or unattainable beloved. In mood and style they range wide. 'Liebesbotschaft', with its magical, gliding modulations, is Schubert's last evocation of the rippling brook. 'Ständchen' has survived any number of kitsch arrangements to remain the most bewitching of his many serenades with quasi-guitar accompaniment – though the minor key and the singer's long-drawn-out sigh on the final 'Beglücke mich!' suggest melancholy resignation rather than expectation that his love is requited.

These bittersweet love lyrics are balanced by three songs in darker vein. The narrative ballad 'Kriegers Ahnung' foreshadows Mahler's songs of doomed soldiers and drummer boys, while 'Aufenthalt' and 'In der Ferne' are both grandly sombre songs of Romantic alienation in the tradition of the famous 'Der Wanderer' of 1816. With typically Schubertian legerdemain, the delicious mandolin-style accompaniment of the final Rellstab song, 'Abschied', is cunningly fashioned to evoke both the trotting horse and the twinkling stars. When I meet pianist Julius Drake, who

entitled 'Die Heimkehr' (The Homecoming). And if, like other composers (Schumann included), he can miss a note of deflating mockery in Heine's verses, he encapsulates and heightens all their disillusion and *Weltschmerz*.

'You can hardly believe that this is the composer of the *Trout* Quintet and the Octet!' says Drake. 'Just as astonishing is the huge difference in style between the Rellstab and the Heine songs. Both are equally great. But the Rellstab poems inspire much richer, warmer piano textures, while Heine's verses brought out a minimalist bleakness whose only parallels in Schubert are the final songs of the two halves of *Winterreise*, 'Einsamkeit' and 'Der Leiermann'. 'Der Doppelgänger', the poet's encounter with his own ghostly double, is one of the most extraordinary, frightening songs in existence: those stark single chords, often without the third, repeated like a passacaglia and building to a series of shattering climaxes that remain as bleak as the opening.'

Tenor Christoph Prégardien, who has made a series of probing Schubert recordings with fortepianist Andreas Staier, cites three of the Heine songs, 'Thr Bild', 'Am Meer' and 'Der Doppelgänger', as among the most intimidating ever written. 'In *Schwanengesang* Schubert explored new

Right: Schubert's *Sanctus* is a musical counterpart to paintings such as this one by Turner, c1831 ('Lifeboat and Manby Apparatus')

Below: Schubert's handwritten score of the *Kyrie* from his Mass in E flat, written just a few months before his death



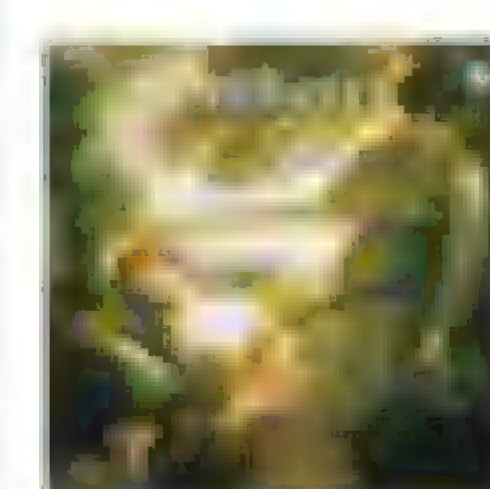


emotional *Abgründe* – abysses. And in those three songs, especially, you feel artistically naked. In “Am Meer”, for instance, there is a huge psychological gulf between voice and accompanist, between the singer’s sweet, *bel canto* line and the strange harmonies and empty sonorities of the piano. Many singers agree that *Schwanengesang* is even more demanding than *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, technically and emotionally. It really needs two different types of tenor, like the two arias in Bach’s *St John Passion*.

“The heroic despair of “Der Atlas” requires a Heldentenor, while at the opposite extreme “Ständchen” and “Das Fischermädchen” need a light, lyric colouring and seductive charm. The Rellstab and Heine settings are so different in style that I usually prefer to separate them with a group of Seidl settings from Schubert’s last year, including “Die Taubenpost”. In the Heine songs I like to use the poet’s order, rather than Schubert’s, beginning with the optimistic serenade “Fischermädchen” and ending with “Der Atlas” – this creates a logical dramatic development which I can’t find in Schubert’s order.’

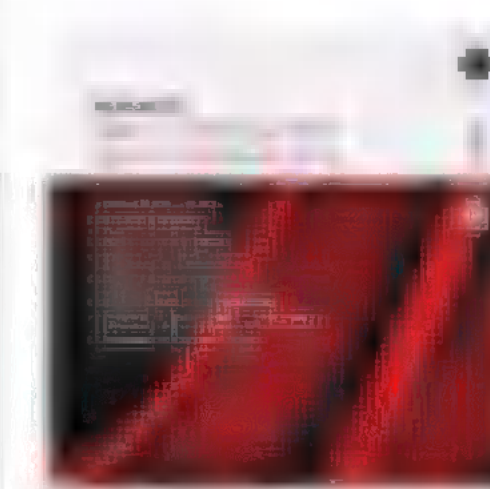
By the time he completed the Heine songs in August, Schubert was apparently suffering regularly from the ▶

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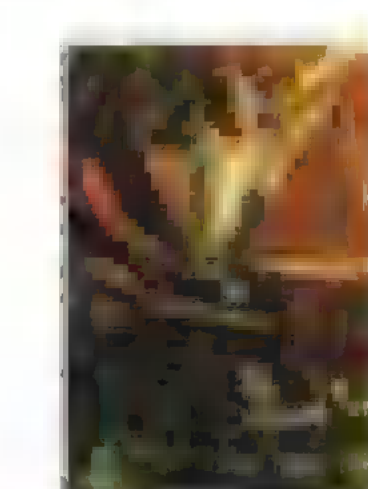


• Mass in E flat
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Prégardien *ten* Staier *fp*
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‘Mitsuko Uchida plays Schubert’
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Deeply poetic readings of (in particular) the Sonata in B flat, D960, and the *Drei Klavierstücke* from a Schubertian of rare insight and spirituality. No pianist surpasses Uchida’s limpid *cantabile* sonorities heard here.



String Quintet
Belcea Quartet, Valentin Erben *vc*
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Coupled on a two-disc set with the String Quartets in D minor, D810, and G major, D887, this fine, classically conceived performance makes an excellent modern recommendation.

giddiness, headaches and gastritis that had plagued him during the previous summer. On September 1 he moved, on Dr Rinna's advice, from his rooms in Schober's luxurious apartment to his brother Ferdinand's house outside the city walls – though any benefit from the cleaner air was more than offset by the dampness of his new quarters. As far as we can infer from fragmentary documentation, Schubert still led an active social life, walking into the city to meet friends at their favourite drinking haunts. Meanwhile, in September – a *mensis mirabilis* if ever there was one – he completed the three last piano sonatas, and the String Quintet. According to his friends, he played all three sonatas, some two hours of

He needs many hundreds of bars here – that “heavenly length” that Schumann noted in his music.’

For Imogen Cooper who, like Brendel and Uchida, has often played the last three sonatas in a single programme, the A major poses the greatest challenge. ‘Even more than in the C minor, in the first movement it’s difficult to find an organic pulse – what Edwin Fischer called “the long silver chord of tension” – for both the first and second themes. And this movement, especially, often evokes the sounds of the orchestra, as in the opening bars, a summons to attention that is immediately followed by a delicate pianistic response.’

Many of Schubert's late slow movements are built on extreme contrasts of calm and turbulence. But the disruptive

‘BEETHOVEN IS A CONCISE COMPOSER, WHEREAS SCHUBERT IS ALWAYS A SLOW COMPOSER, EVEN IN A FAST TEMPO’ ANDREAS STAIER

music, at a musical party on September 27: a daunting challenge for anyone, let alone a man in weakened health.

THE FINAL SONATA TRILOGY

The notion of Schubert as Beethoven's self-appointed successor rings especially true in the case of the C minor and A major piano sonatas, D958 and D959. Both works draw on Beethovenian precedents: for instance, the 32 Variations in C minor at the opening of D958, and (in its structure and textures) the Sonata in G, Op 31 No 1, in the finale of D959. But far more striking are the differences between the two composers. The Beethoven finale is terse, whereas Schubert's unfolds luxuriantly (‘a daydream of bliss’, in the words of Alfred Brendel). Even at his most vehement, Beethoven retains a magnificent sanity and control. However, in parts of the C minor Sonata and in the eruption in the *Andantino* of the A major, Schubert peers into the abyss.

The finale of the C minor Sonata, dubbed a ‘death hunt’ by Mitsuko Uchida, is the culmination of a series of Schubertian night-rides that reach back to *Erlkönig* of 1815. Andreas Staier, who has made a revelatory recording of the last three sonatas on a fortepiano of Schubert's day, emphasises the obsessive, nightmarish quality of this finale – a counterpart to the finale of the Quartet in G, D887 (1826). ‘In this sonata, unlike its two companions, Schubert makes the finale the weightiest movement. And it's the opposite of superficially similar Beethoven movements – the finale of the *Kreutzer* Sonata, or the galloping finale of the E flat Sonata, Op 31 No 3 – in its expansiveness. Beethoven is a concise composer, telling stories quickly, with abrupt transitions. Schubert, on the other hand, is always a slow composer, even in a fast tempo.

violence of the central section of the A major Sonata is without precedent. The remote, melancholy barcarolle is confronted by an increasingly frenzied fantasia that pushes the music to the brink of incoherence. Brendel has described this terrifying, prophetic eruption as the musical equivalent of a nervous breakdown, while for Uchida it is, simply, ‘the greatest mad scene ever written’. Brendel, though, utters a word of caution: ‘Nowadays, one has to defend Schubert against those who try to turn him, musically, into a constant depressive, if not a hysterical madman. I know of little music as frightening as this outburst, or as shattering as “Der Doppelgänger”. Yet this same A major Sonata has a jolly *Scherzo* and a generously happy finale.’

In the B flat Sonata, D960, any Beethovenian influence is at best oblique: there's a distant recollection of the *Archduke* Trio, perhaps, in the serene opening; and, in the way the finale's Hungarian-tinged theme quizzically approaches B flat via C minor, there's a half-echo of the finale Beethoven wrote to replace the *Grosse Fuge* in his Op 130 Quartet. But in spirit the sonata is utterly un-Beethovenian. The mysterious contemplative ecstasy of the first two movements is, with the G major Sonata, D894, of 1826 and parts of the String Quintet, the consummation of a quintessential Schubertian experience first glimpsed in his 1815 setting of Goethe's ‘Der du von dem Himmel bist’.

The soft, deep trill on a dissonant G flat which intrudes on the sublime calm of the opening theme illustrates a crucial difference between Beethoven's and Schubert's methods. Where Beethoven would have integrated the trill into the music's argument, for Schubert it remains something strangely ‘other’, an extreme contrast in sonority and register with everything that surrounds it – and, as



SCHUBERT'S LAST YEAR (1828)

JANUARY

Fantasie for violin and piano publicly performed. January 20. Special Schubertiade to celebrate Joseph von Spaun's engagement, including performance of E flat Piano Trio, January 28

Works: Begins F minor Fantasie for piano duet

FEBRUARY

Letters arrive from two publishers, Probst and Schott, expressing interest in Schubert's works. Plans for benefit concert

MARCH

Composes *Auf dem Strom* for ‘Franz Schubert's Invitation Concert’ in the hall of the Philharmonic Society, March 26. Concert makes Schubert a substantial profit

Works: *Mirjam's Siegesgesang* finished by the end of the month

APRIL

Offers various works, including the E flat Piano Trio, to Schott and Probst. Probst eventually accepts the Trio for 30 gulden

Works: Finishes F minor Fantasie. Drafts several settings of Ludwig Reilstab, completing ‘Herbst’

MAY

Treats Bauernfeld to a ticket for Paganini's concert, May 4

Works: Composes the *Drei Klavierstücke*, D946, and two works for piano duet: the A minor Allegro, D947 (*Lebensstürme*), and the Rondo in A, D951

Staier stresses, the contrast is even more extreme with the remote, otherworldly colouring created by the fortepiano's *una corda* pedal. Just once, in the transition from exposition to development – heard only if the exposition is repeated – does the trill erupt in *fortissimo* violence. Schubertians are sharply divided on whether or not to play this repeat. For Uchida, who describes this first movement as 'a glimpse of eternity, where life and death have ended', it is indispensable to the music's structure. For Brendel, the trill's *fortissimo* appearance in the transition is a rare Schubertian miscalculation – and he notes that in Schubert's first draft the trill remained in its original *pianissimo*. Cooper puts it more bluntly: 'That *fortissimo* trill is a violation!'

'THE WHOLE OF SCHUBERT': THE C MAJOR STRING QUINTET

Reflecting how Schubert's piano so often evokes an orchestra, a chamber group, or (as in the finale of D959 or the opening of D960) a Lieder singer, Alfred Brendel has remarked that Schubert's last three sonatas can seem like veiled string quartets and quintets. In the *Andante* of the B flat Sonata – another of Schubert's nocturnal barcarolles – one can imagine second violin and viola floating the melody against *pizzicatos* from the other strings: a weightless texture akin to the *Adagio* of the C major String Quintet, which Schubert must have conceived at virtually the same time.

The Quintet is famous above all for this unearthly *Adagio* (the music Thomas Mann most wanted to hear on his deathbed) and the first movement's nostalgic duet for two cellos. Yet despite these moments of transfiguration, the work as a whole is far from serene. Brendel has observed that it contains 'a very dark core'. Even at the opening, C major, traditionally a symbol of affirmation, is shadowed by diminished harmonies and minor-keyed inflections. In another violent contrast so characteristic of Schubert's late slow movements, the *Adagio*'s trancelike stillness is shattered by the tumult of the central section – a disruption fleetingly echoed, with eerie effect, in the movement's closing bars.

For Krzysztof Chorzelski, viola player in the Belcea Quartet, the C major Quintet, more than any other work, 'embraces every side of Schubert: exquisite lyricism, Viennese *Gemütlichkeit* in the finale's theme for two cellos, intense pathos and, in parts of the first movement and finale, a titanic sense of struggle. The centre of the *Adagio* is one of the most tormented outbursts in all music. And the sombre Trio of the *Scherzo*, with the instruments on their lowest string, is like a funeral procession. The whole work is based on the tense, grating interval of the semitone.

And after the finale's attempts at cheerfulness – which I can ▶



Julius Drake has accompanied countless singers in Schubert's *Schwanengesang*



Andreas Staier, here with Christoph Prégardien, recorded the final sonatas on a fortepiano of Schubert's day

JUNE

Visits the resorts of Heiligenkreuz and Baden with friends, June 3 & 4. Short excursions with Schober and friends during the summer

Works: Begins intensive work on Mass in E flat. Probably begins to sketch last three piano sonatas

JULY

Works: Continues composing the Mass, probably completed by the end of the month. Composes setting of Psalm 92, to a Hebrew text, for the famous cantor Salomon Sulzer

AUGUST

Health worsens towards the end of the month

Works: Completes *Reilstab* songs and composes six Heine settings. All are published posthumously as *Schwanengesang*

SEPTEMBER

On his doctor's advice Schubert moves to his brother Ferdinand's home in the new Wieden suburb, September 1

Works: Completes the last three piano sonatas and the C major String Quintet by the end of the month

OCTOBER

Three-day walking tour to visit Haydn's grave in Eisenstadt, October 6-8. Falls ill after eating fish, October 31

Works: Composes his final songs, 'Die Taubenpost' and 'Der Hirt auf dem Felsen'. Sketches for a symphony in D major

NOVEMBER

By November 11 is too ill to leave his room. Corrects proofs of the second part of *Winterreise*. Karl Holz and members of the Schuppanzigh Quartet play Beethoven's C sharp minor Quartet Op 131 for him, November 14. Dies November 19, with brother Ferdinand at his bedside

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never quite believe in – the movement ends with a dissonant D flat hanging in the air, never fully resolved: it leaves a bitter aftertaste, like a tragic resignation to fate.'

On October 6, days after finishing the Quintet, Schubert, his brother Ferdinand and two friends set off on a three-day walk to visit Haydn's tomb in Eisenstadt. We can guess that the round trip of over 50 miles left the composer exhausted. Yet he continued to compose during October: the virtuoso scena with clarinet 'Der Hirt auf dem Felsen' for the Berlin prima donna Anna Milder-Hauptmann (further evidence of Schubert's growing fame beyond Vienna), two short liturgical works, and 'Die Taubenpost', incongruously appended to *Schwanengesang*. It's somehow touching that his final song for voice and piano is not a grand or tragic statement but tenderly wistful, 'smiling with a sigh', to borrow a phrase from *Cymbeline*.

According to Ferdinand, Schubert's final illness dates from October 31, when he became nauseous after eating fish at the tavern Zum roten Kreuz. 'After this, he ate and drank hardly anything but medicines.' But on November 4 he still managed to walk a mile with a friend to the home of the organist and theorist Simon Sechter for the first of a planned course of lessons in formal counterpoint. As Imogen Cooper remarks, 'You don't take counterpoint lessons if you know you're dying.' A prime incentive for these lessons was surely the craggy contrapuntal mastery of Beethoven's late works, not least in the *Missa solemnis* and Ninth Symphony. In October, Schubert had begun to sketch a symphony in D major, whose textures are far more contrapuntal than anything in his previous symphonies. 'Counterpoint studies produced pedantic results in most 19th-century composers,' says Andreas Staier. 'But the signs are that if Schubert had lived to finish the symphony he would have created a new, totally unacademic polyphony. The sketch of the *Andante* looks forward to 'Der Abschied' in Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*.'

These symphonic fragments – another tantalising Schubertian might-have-been – were the last music he set down. On November 12, the composer wrote to Franz Schober: 'I am ill. I have eaten nothing for 11 days and drunk nothing. I totter feebly and shakily from my chair to my bed and back again.' Two days later Schubert, now bedridden, was deeply moved when the Schuppanzigh Quartet played for him Beethoven's C sharp minor String Quartet, Op 131. That day the doctor diagnosed 'advanced disintegration of the blood corpuscles'. On November 19 he died, two months before his 32nd birthday, and music suffered the cruellest of its premature losses. The cause of his death has provoked endless debate. His immune system had been progressively weakened by the venereal infection he had carried for six years. What actually killed him may have been typhoid fever, or an aneurism caused by a debilitation of the heart vessels.

In his memorial inscription the poet Franz Grillparzer famously wrote: 'The art of music has here buried a rich possession but far fairer hopes.' Just how rich a possession Grillparzer could not have suspected: for though Schubert was celebrated for his songs and shorter piano pieces, the full scope of his genius as a composer of large-scale orchestral, chamber and piano works remained hidden for many years after he died. Today we contemplate that genius with mingled awe and delight. Yet with those visionary late works in mind it is hard – far harder than with Mozart, as Brendel implies – to escape an aching sense of what might have been. 6



'WHEREAS MOZART HAD ARRIVED AT A KIND OF LATE STYLE, SCHUBERT WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF A TREMENDOUS DEVELOPMENT WHEN HE DIED'

ALFRED BRENDEL

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February 19, 11am
Berlin State Opera, Berlin
 Daniel Barenboim's fourth of five cycles that began last year focuses on Schubert's Piano Sonatas in G major, D894, and C minor, D958.
staatsoper-berlin.de

February 23, 8pm
Severance Hall, Cleveland
 Schubert's 'Great' C major Symphony is performed here by the Cleveland Orchestra under Marek Janowski.
clevelandorchestra.com

February 24, 8.30pm
Parco della Musica, Rome
 Established duo Ian Bostridge and Julius Drake perform Schubert's timeless *Winterreise* in the grand yet intimate surroundings of Sala Sinopoli.
santacecilia.it

February 28, 7.30pm
St John's, Smith Square, London
 Rising star baritone Marcus Farnsworth is joined by Joseph Middleton to sing Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*.
sjss.org.uk

February 28, 8pm
Salle Pleyel, Paris
 Matthias Goerne and Christoph Eschenbach, another renowned partnership, tackle Schubert's

Winterreise in this, the second Schubert cycle at the Salle Pleyel.
sallepleyel.fr

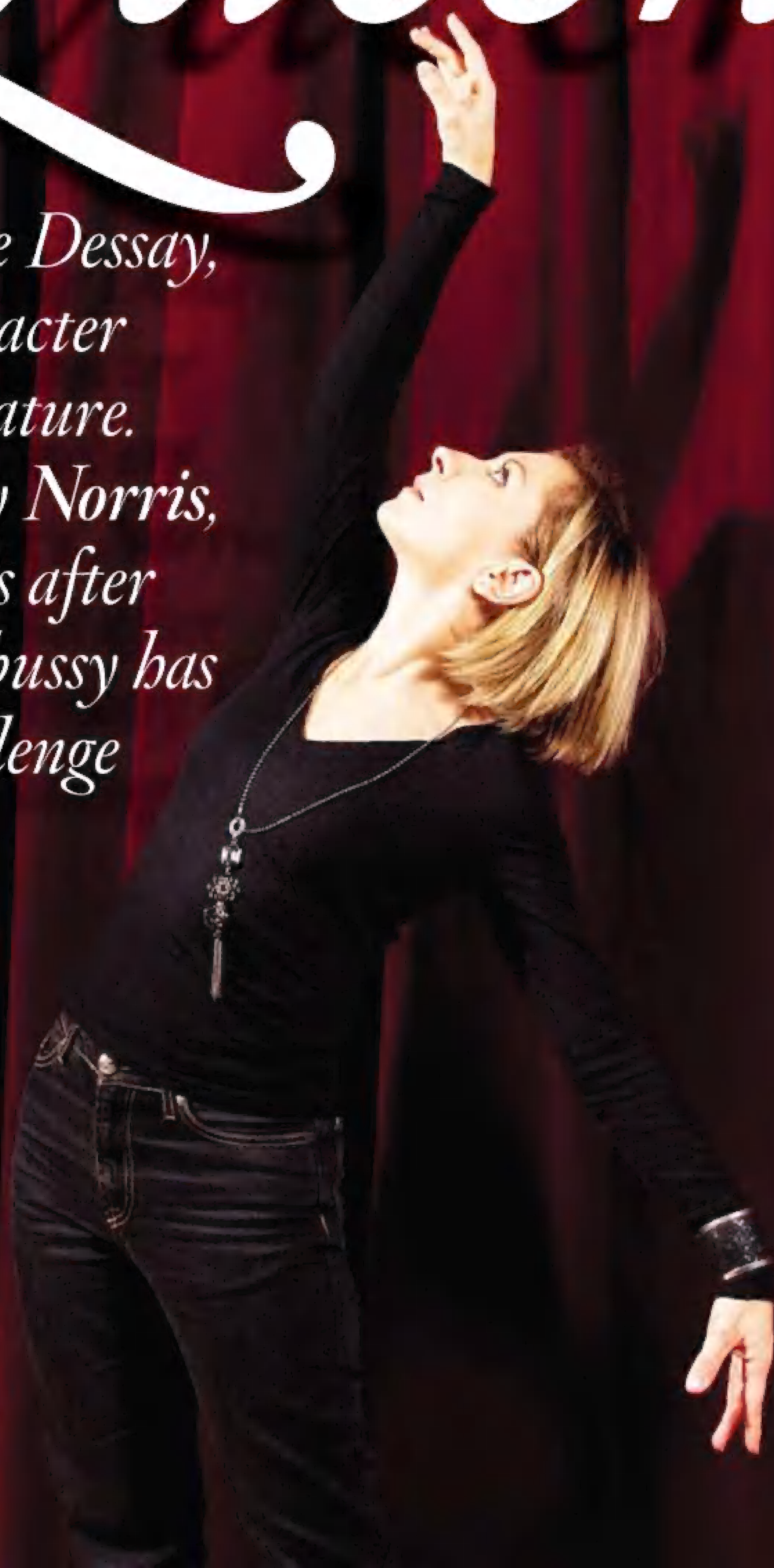
March 23-31
BBC Radio 3 - The Spirit of Schubert
 Including live concerts every day from across the UK, and featuring artists such as Imogen Cooper, Graham Johnson, Felicity Lott and Ian Bostridge, this week-long radio event promises to be a fascinating exploration of Schubert's music.
bbc.co.uk/radio3

April 23, 7.30pm
Royal Festival Hall, London
 The great Schubert interpreter Mitsuko Uchida performs the composer's last three piano sonatas, D958, D959 and D960 – pieces often ranked among the most emotionally challenging and melodically breathtaking ever composed.
southbankcentre.co.uk

May 9, 7.30pm
Barbican Hall, London
 Pairing up with regular accompanist Jeremy Denk, violinist Joshua Bell opens his programme with Schubert's Sonatina in A minor.
barbican.org.uk

Drama Queen

For soprano Natalie Dessay, morphing into character on stage is second nature. But, finds Geoffrey Norris, returning to recitals after 15 years to sing Debussy has been more of a challenge



Within the heady realms of opera, the French soprano Natalie Dessay is a one-off, celebrated as much for her athletic acting skills as she is for her agile coloratura voice. If you happen to be staging Donizetti's *La fille du régiment* and need a Marie who can peel potatoes, do the ironing and at the same time hurl out ringing top Cs, Dessay is your woman, as was indelibly proved when Laurent Pelly asked her to do just that in the production he made for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, five years ago. Dessay is also tailor-made for mad scenes, a Lucia in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* of terrifying intensity. She is as far from the stand-and-deliver school of opera singing as could possibly be imagined, a volcano of energy that seems to be constantly on the brink of eruption. And the source of that energy? 'Rage,' she tells me as we sit demurely in the Café Beaubourg opposite the Pompidou Centre in Paris. 'Ever since childhood I've always been upset by everything. I've been against everyone. I express myself through rage. It's a question of transforming something bad into something artistic. And that's better than punching someone.'

Very true. I realise as we sit across the café table that I am well within striking distance. Dessay is petite, polite but full of surprises, so I swiftly move on to the question of exercise. Someone who expends so much energy on stage must have a fitness regime. 'When I'm in a production I have to train almost every day,' she admits. 'I do yoga for back problems and for opening up the chest. I also do the flying trapeze,' she says in a matter-of-fact way that suggests it might be part of everybody's regular routine. The flying trapeze? I remark that this is a piece of equipment we haven't yet acquired in my local gym. 'It's a recent discovery of mine,' says Dessay. 'You have to find a circus in which to train.' Which is precisely what she has done. More than that, she has actually swung on a trapeze for French TV. In November she took part in the annual Gala de l'Union, a charitable spectacular raising funds for impecunious artists, in which actors, singers and showbiz stars all performed some sort of circus act. It seems entirely in Dessay's risk-taking nature that she chose the trapeze. She modelled herself on the Italian actress Giulietta Masina in Fellini's classic 1954 film *La strada*. 'I was flying in the air and not doing anything else,' she says blithely. But when safely back on the ground, she sang a song by the iconic Michel ('The Windmills of your Mind') Legrand. 'He was there,' she says. 'To see him like that in front of me – I was so impressed.' Legrand, a friend of Dessay's, has written her a new song-cycle, which she plans to record.

It's clear that Dessay's versatility goes much further than even those who have witnessed her in the opera theatre might have imagined. And she has now branched out in yet another direction with a disc of Debussy songs, around the release of which she is embarking on a series of recitals with the pianist Philippe Cassard. 'I haven't done any recitals for 15 years,' Dessay admits. 'I stopped because I thought it was too difficult for me. We've done the recording, but I'm very afraid of the concerts.' So why put yourself through it, I wonder? 'Because of Philippe,' is the swift retort. 'He forced me. At the beginning I didn't



Equal partnership: Dessay with Philippe Cassard, who initiated the Debussy project

want to do it because I think it's very, very difficult to sing songs and to do recitals. I didn't have enough confidence. I still don't. But he pursued me. I told him that there are other sopranos much better than I am, with much more beautiful voices and enthusiasm, but he insisted.' Perhaps, I suggest, he thought she had special qualities that she could bring to Debussy's songs? 'I have no idea,' is the casual reply. 'Why me? I don't know.'

So I ring up Philippe Cassard and ask him. The Debussy disc turns out to have a fascinating genesis. For several years, Cassard has been presenting radio programmes on piano interpretation, broadcast by France Musique. The sessions are open to the public, and one of the regular members of Cassard's audience is the granddaughter of Gabriel Saint-René Taillandier, an organ pupil of César Franck and also a close friend of Debussy. Cassard takes up the story: 'One day I'd been talking a lot about Debussy, and this lady came up to me and asked if I would like to visit her at home, because she had some things connected with Debussy that she thought I might like to see. In her study were manuscripts of 10 Debussy songs – four of them unpublished and two of them completely unknown.'

'The flying trapeze is a recent discovery of mine. You have to find a circus in which to train'

Cassard was thrilled, even more so when the lady gave him the manuscripts as a gift. They were authenticated, and then Cassard set about thinking who could sing them.

'They are early songs,' says Cassard, 'composed when Debussy was 20 or 22 and written for Marie Vasnier, an amateur soprano who was the wife of one of Debussy's early benefactors. Debussy was in love with her, and composed his first 40 songs for her. She was a high soprano, a *soprano léger*, and I thought immediately of Natalie. I'd heard her sing *Mélisande* at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna, and was impressed by the youth in her voice. My personal opinion is that she brings to the songs the fragrance of youth, spontaneity, poetry and intimacy. As a pianist I learnt a lot from her.' Cassard does, however, confirm Dessay's initial reticence to fall in with his plan. 'She said she was an opera singer and hadn't done recitals for 15 years, but little by little her memory of the Debussy

*'I'm like a puppet
who receives life
from the director'*



songs she had sung many years ago returned clearly. In the Mallarmé setting, 'Apparition', she sang the high C as though she had done it only the day before. On the first day of recording we planned to do three songs. In the event we did nine, four of the songs in a single take.'

'Apparition' happens to be one of Dessay's favourite songs. 'Every time I sing it I hope I won't destroy it because it's so beautiful,' she says. 'It's a big responsibility, but I'm always happy to sing in French. I can really express myself much better in French than in any other language, although I speak German quite well. Singing in English is really difficult for a French singer, but for my husband [the bass-baritone Laurent Naouri] it's not difficult. He sings perfectly in English. When he sings jazz, people don't know whether he's American or French. When I sing Michel Legrand songs, everybody knows that I'm French. I really love my language, and I really love words.'

Philippe Cassard says that Dessay 'speaks French beautifully'. He also observes that she seems to lead about 10 lives. She shares a love of horses with her teenage daughter, who plays the piano because, explains Dessay, 'she's a fan of Lady Gaga. So when she discovered that Lady Gaga is a real pianist, she started to work. Thank you, Lady Gaga,' Dessay says gleefully. Her son plays the saxophone; he has joined his mother in the pursuit of yoga and is also being introduced to the delights of the flying trapeze. But over tea at the Café Beaubourg we return to her nervousness about performing recitals. 'I'm frightened about everything,' she maintains, 'even about opera, but I have to do something to earn my money. But opera is easier, because I can hide myself behind a character, behind everything actually – costumes, the set, the orchestra – so that I am not so naked as with only a piano. For me, it's much more difficult to learn a recital, because in opera you learn it beforehand, and then your body learns it when you do a production. I have a very, very bad memory, but if there are gestures and the motivation to go from one place to another I can remember the text. The whole physical part is important to me.'

Dessay's presence on the opera stage is so visceral, so inventive, so highly charged with character and emotion that it is no surprise to learn that acting preceded singing as her possible career path. Before that, she had aspirations to be a dancer, but her vocal talents were spotted when she was doing acting classes in her younger days, and so music (her 'third choice', as she says) became the focus, but with a strong bias towards acting as well. The process of preparing a new role, she says, is protracted. 'If I have to learn a new part, I take a long time, because I'm very, very slow, so I learn it maybe one or two years before. I need this time to have it in the body and the memory. I work a lot with myself, asking myself questions all the time, how to embody the character, how to walk on stage, whether I should do one gesture rather than another, how to look at partners – everything is a source of question.' Dessay likes rehearsing thoroughly, which means that she can undertake no more than four productions a year, and she is certainly not one of those divas who arrives at rehearsals with fixed ideas. 'I count a lot on the director,' she says. 'He has to make it alive. I have the music and the words, and I bring my own energy, of course, and some ideas also,



NATALIE DESSAY

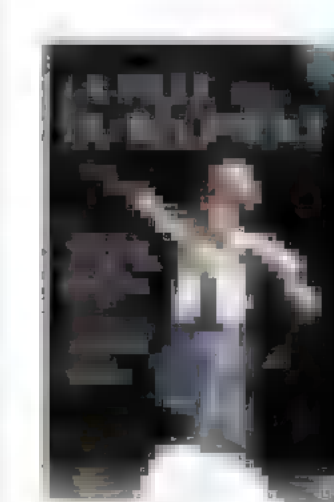
Physical presence: Dessay's high energy on stage is exemplified in *La fille du régiment*

but it's always a case of what the director wants from me, what he proposes. I don't rule anything out. It's much more interesting to be like a puppet, but a puppet who receives life from the director.'

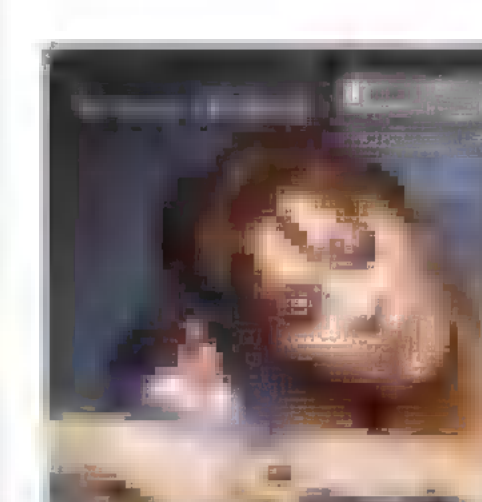
But what happens if the director turns out to be a dud? 'I want to hear what the director has to say,' Dessay answers, 'and I'm OK with that most of the time, because I choose the directors I work with. Sometimes I don't have a choice, and it can be a nightmare. If you can't trust the person who is supposed to direct you, it's hard.' I sense a bit of an agenda here, but Dessay loyally goes no further. When we meet, she is in the final rehearsal process for a new production of Massenet's *Manon* at Paris's Opéra Bastille, and I notice in the press a few days later that it has been critically mauled for its directorial silliness. 'I'm happy at least to do this Debussy with Philippe,' says Dessay, 'because he's a wonderful pianist and a wonderful man also. It's been a real encounter.' Dessay is giving five recitals with Cassard of Debussy songs intermingled with melodies by Chabrier, Chausson, Duparc and Fauré in France, Switzerland and England (ending up at London's Wigmore Hall on March 4). After that, she is off to the Met for *La traviata* in April and May, and to La Scala for *Manon* in June and July. For the time being, at least, it looks as though the flying trapeze will be at a standstill. **G**

► To read Gramophone's review of Dessay's Debussy, turn to page 68

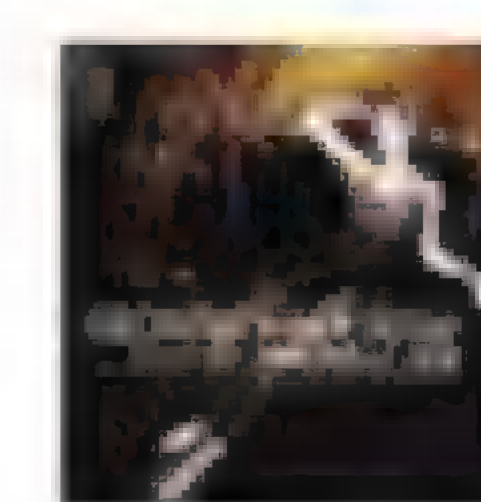
DESSAY ON DISC



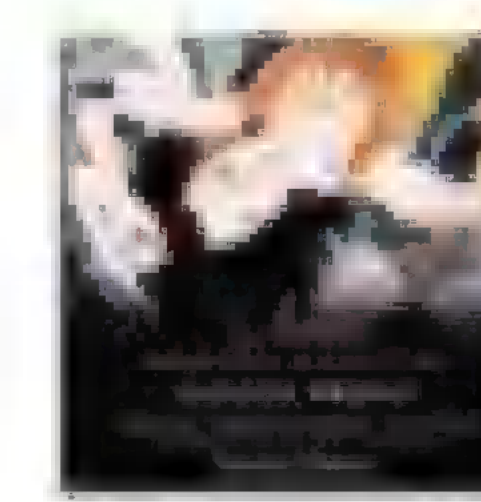
Donizetti: *La fille du régiment*
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'Amor'
Natalie Dessay, Felicity Lott *sops* Angelika Kirchschlager, Sophie Koch *mezs* Thomas Allen *bar*
Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden / Antonio Pappano
Virgin Classics (CD) 641933-2 (1/05)
Dessay has said that Richard Strauss is the key to her career. Here, she teams up with other leading singers to perform arias and ensembles from Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Arabella* and *Der Rosenkavalier*.

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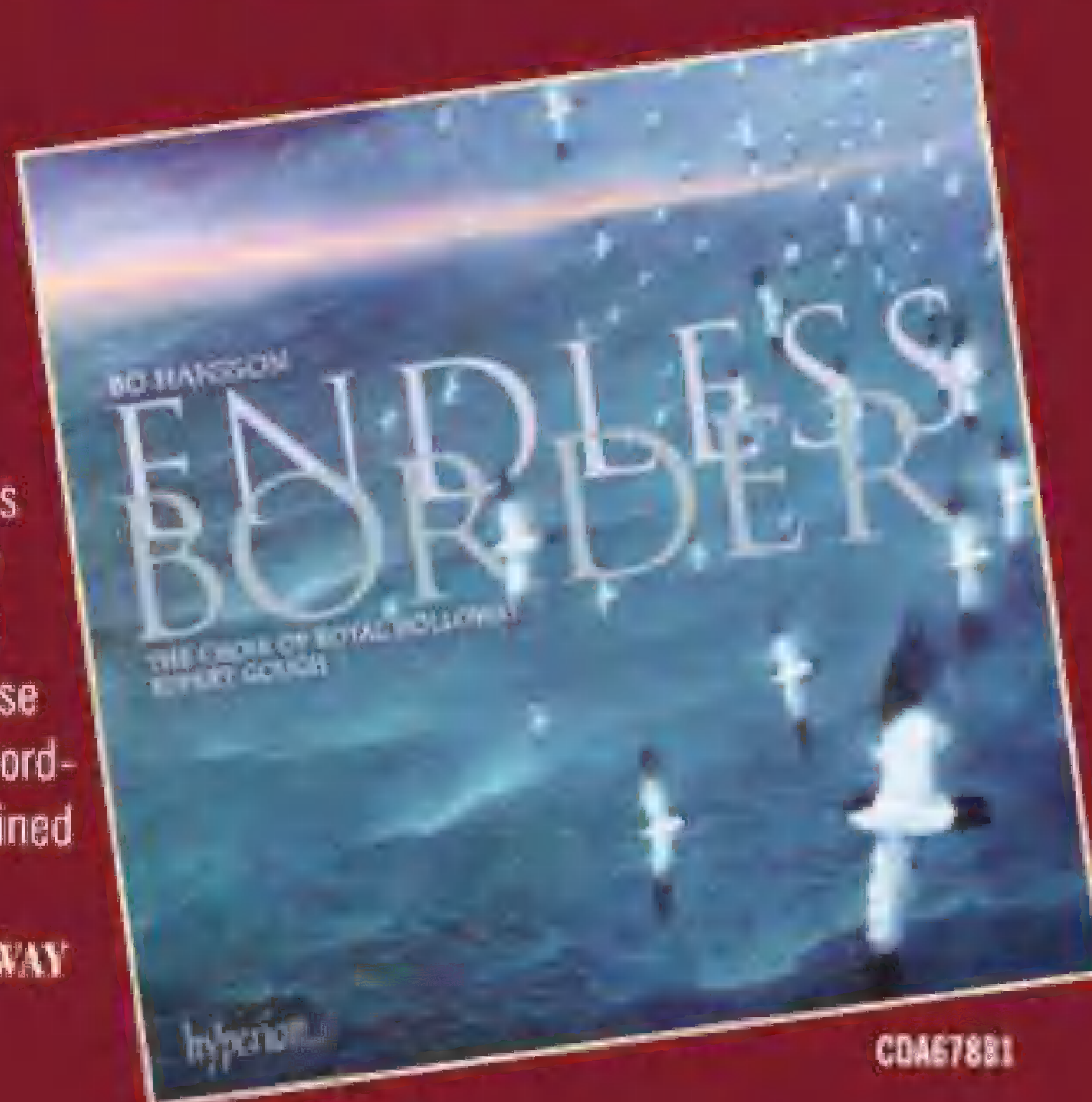
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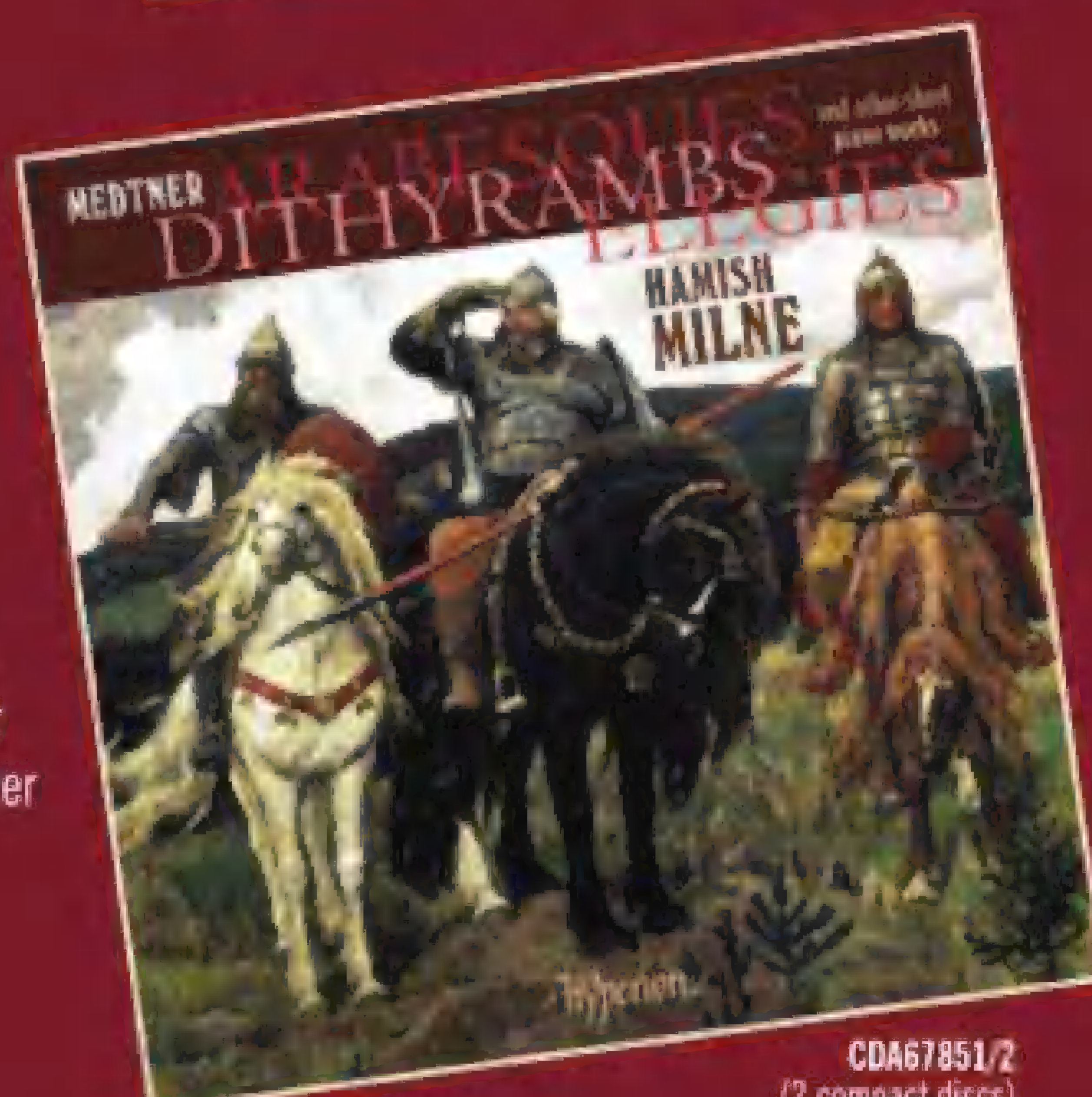
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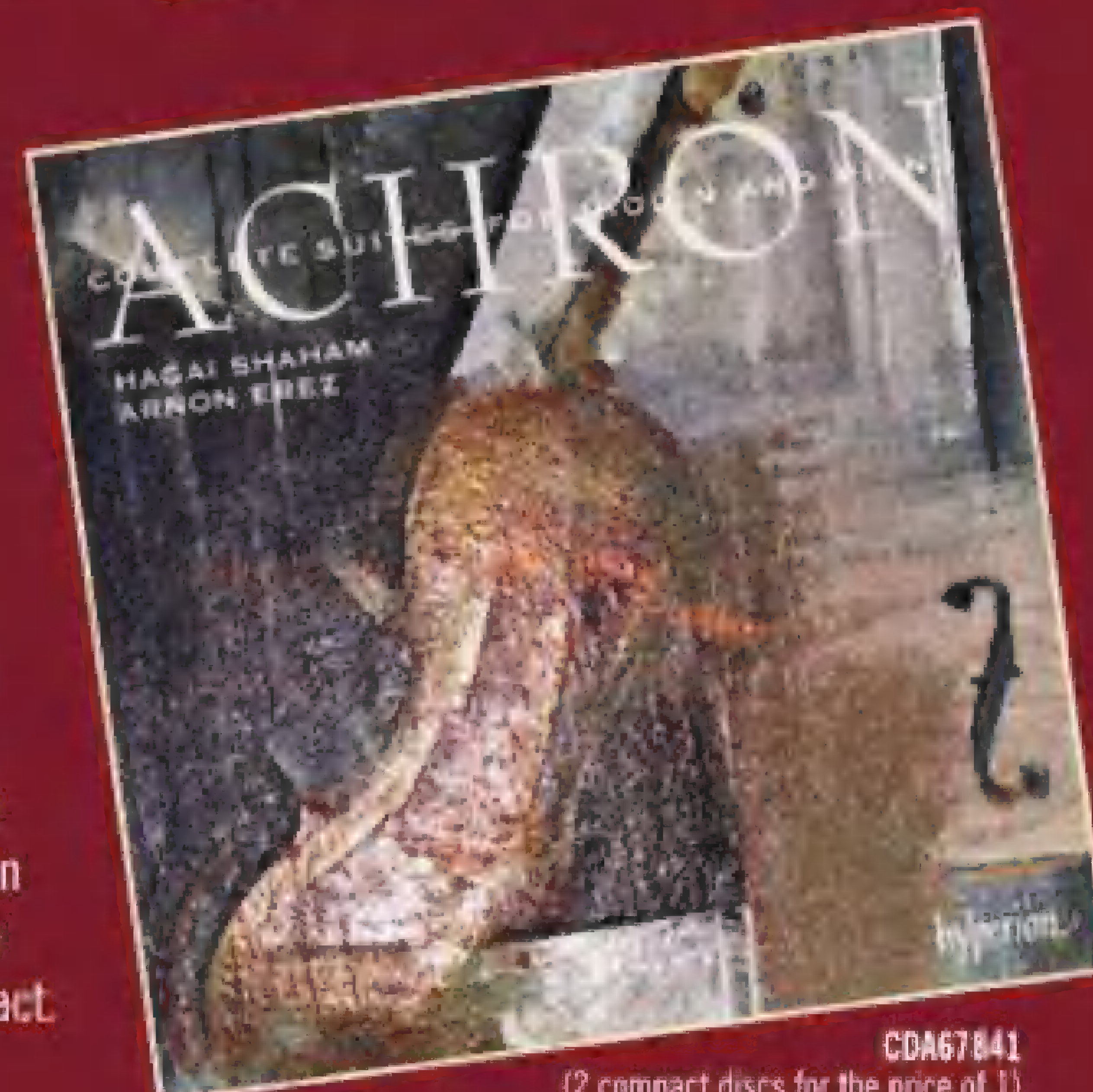
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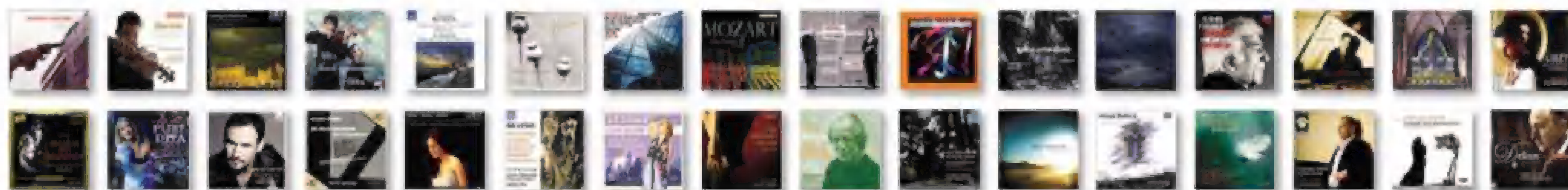
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March 2012

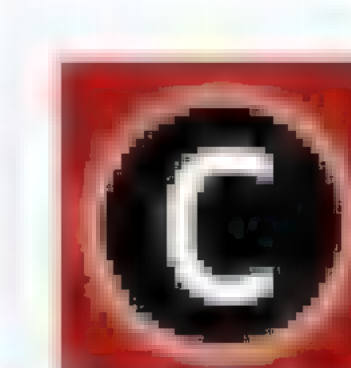


Paul Hillier conducts the National Chamber Choir of Ireland in Tarik O'Regan ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 72](#)

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GRAMOPHONE *Reviewers*



Richard Whitehouse

I wonder if I'm the only reviewer who began as a civil servant, before spells in music retail, mechanical copyright and *Gramophone's* own editorial department during the later 1990s – where, early on, I was taken to task by Lionel Salter for not knowing the difference in casts between two versions of a Rameau opera. This past decade I've pursued an almost civilised existence as a freelance writer, reviewing discs, books and concerts as well as writing booklet-notes and articles. My eclectic listening, which includes jazz and rock/pop, might account for my dismay over parts of the industry's relentless focus on 'core repertoire': an excuse, surely, for mindless niche marketing as

opposed to the genuine promotion of classical music. Recent listening has taken in figures as varied as Mieczysław Weinberg, Per Nørgård (my choice of greatest living composer) and George Russell – jostling for time alongside veteran iconoclasts The Red Krayola and anarcho-punk band Crass, whose albums (determinedly 'uneasy listening') have been reissued as 'The Crassical Collection'. 'Core'-wise, Thielemann's DVD cycle of Beethoven symphonies occupied me over Christmas. Whether reheated Karajan or antidote to years of dreary authenticity, it was a timely reminder of why listening to music can become a way of life – doubtless to the dismay of others.

Andrew Achenbach
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* Contributing Editor

Recording of the Month



'Faust brings a suggestion of gaiety that renders more poignant the effect of the dark, complex harmony – a bright memory rendered sad and bitter'

Faust's precision reveals intense beauty in Berg and Beethoven, says Duncan Druce

Beethoven • Berg

Beethoven Violin Concerto, Op 61

Berg Violin Concerto

Isabelle Faust *vn*

Orchestra Mozart / Claudio Abbado

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2105 (69' • DDD)

The Beethoven and Berg violin concertos aren't commonly paired on disc. However, in this case it seems like an inspired piece of programme planning, with an account of the Berg that plumbs its depths of melancholy, setting off a radiant, life-affirming performance of the Beethoven.

Berg could be accused of giving too many instructions to his performers, of not allowing enough room for individual interpretation. He certainly presents them with plenty to think about; in the waltz-like second section of the concerto's second movement, Isabelle Faust is required, within a few bars, to characterise her part as *scherzando*, *wienerisch* and *rustico*. She succeeds brilliantly; one feels, in this and other places, that such precision actually helps her to convey the intensity of feeling that lies behind this concerto dedicated 'to the memory of an angel'.

Faust's stylish way with the waltz episodes brings a suggestion of gaiety that renders more poignant the effect of the dark, complex

harmony – a bright memory rendered sad and bitter. In the second movement, after the fierce virtuosity she brings to the declamatory opening section, she chooses the alternative version of the canonic cadenza (suggested by the composer) where she is joined by a solo viola, rather than realising unaided the four-part counterpoint. This passage sounds truly beautiful, like an uneasy oasis of calm in the middle of turbulent conflict, and I've become convinced it's the best way to hear the music. Abbado and the Orchestra Mozart also take careful notice of the score's myriad directions, and the effect is similarly to liberate the intensity and beauty of the music. After the harrowing climax at the end of the first part of the second movement, where the Bach chorale (whose melody is related to Berg's 12-note row) makes its appearance, the effect of having the grieving voice of the solo violin answered by the clarinet choir more quietly, but also slightly faster, and so less weighed down, is perfectly realised – we immediately appreciate why Berg wrote it so.

Few recordings of the Berg have achieved this level of detailed commitment from soloist and orchestra. One that does so is Josef Suk's, made in 1968 with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra under Karel Ančerl, and they

manage to stay closer to Berg's metronome markings – some passages in Faust's recording are on the slow side, though I can't see that it spoils the performance in any way. And this new account enjoys more mellifluous recorded sound, with far superior definition.

Beethoven may not give as many directions as Berg, but from the very first bars the Orchestra Mozart's woodwind choir show the same care over detail, the instruments perfectly balanced and with a commitment to bringing out the music's soulful, expressive character. This sets the tone for the performance, Abbado encouraging his players to maximise the expressive quality of each theme, while keeping a firm hand on the unfolding of the larger design. He and Faust see eye to eye in wishing to preserve a proper *Allegro ma non troppo* for the first movement and not to be awed by the work's reputation into presenting it as a grand, Olympian utterance with little vitality (as on the Maxim Vengerov/Rostropovich recording). It's not just a matter of tempo, either; to all the running passages in the first movement and finale, Isabelle Faust brings a spirited style that at moments becomes positively fiery. A notable example is her cadenza in the finale (track 5, 6'20"). Faust



Perfectly balanced: Isabelle Faust and Claudio Abbado's Orchestra Mozart



Taskmaster: Berg gives clear instructions in his concerto

bases her cadenzas and lead-ins on those Beethoven wrote for his adaptation of the work as a piano concerto. This is often an uncomfortable option: Beethoven's cadenzas (that in the first movement includes an important role for timpani) take the music in surprising directions – more extrovert and playful – and it's quite difficult to arrange some passages idiomatically for the violin. However, by judicious omission, brilliant playing and sheer conviction, Faust finds a solution that's both authentically Beethovenian and violinistically convincing. The *Larghetto*'s initial theme is most sensitively shaped by the Orchestra Mozart strings and, at Faust's entry, she is accompanied by especially beautiful solo

clarinet and bassoon lines. In this movement, Faust finds a particularly wide range of tone colour, twice receding to the merest whisper and in several places practically omitting vibrato, relying for expression on changes in bow speed and pressure, so creating a powerful sense of concentration in the melodic line. It's entirely characteristic of this performance that the sudden orchestral outburst at the end of the *Larghetto*, heralding the cadenza that leads to the finale, which so often seems inappropriately formal, here comes as a shocking surprise, a rude awakening from an exquisite dream.

In recent years, there have been several fine recordings of the Beethoven Violin Concerto. Faust's performance has a grandeur that Christian Tetzlaff's sweeter, more intimate account doesn't attempt to match. Janine Jansen has the grandeur but doesn't quite rival Faust's expressive range or emotional intensity. Outstanding performances of both concertos, then; I'll want to return to them often. **G**

Berg – selected comparison:

Suk (1/03) (SUPR) SU3663-2

Beethoven – selected comparisons:

Tetzlaff (6/06) (ARTN) 82876 76994-2

Jansen (1/10) (DECC) 478 1530DH

Listening points

Your guide to the disc's memorable moments

Track 1 Berg - 1st movement, start

The clarinets and harp play together as one instrument. Answering them, Isabelle Faust moves from quietly brushing her open strings to a full, expressive tone.

Track 2 Berg - 2nd movement, from 6'01"

Faust and the orchestra superbly maintain the tension in the lead-up to the movement's catastrophic climax.

Track 2 Berg - 2nd movement, from 12'46"

The Ländler melody from the first movement is heard again 'as from afar'; haunting and intensely nostalgic.

Track 3 Beethoven - 1st movement, from 6'04"

From here to the end of her first solo passage, Faust brings an exceptional degree of animation to her playing.

Track 4 Beethoven - 2nd movement, from 4'22"

In playing this sublimely simple melody, Faust demonstrates that the violin doesn't need much vibrato in order to sound beautiful and expressive.

Track 5 Beethoven - 3rd movement, start

The three presentations of the Rondo theme have great verve, the orchestra picking up Faust's style with enthusiasm.



Visit the Gramophone Player at gramophone.co.uk to hear an excerpt from this issue's Recording of the Month

Orchestral



Edward Seckerson reviews a
Little Russian from Bournemouth:

'This is Tchaikovsky's "Great Gate" to the Ukraine and the parallel is not lost on Karabits' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 49**



Jeremy Nicholas is spellbound as
a Congolese concert is prepared:

'If I hear another moan from anyone in my own choir, I shall make them watch Kinsbasa Symphony' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 51**

A Benjamin

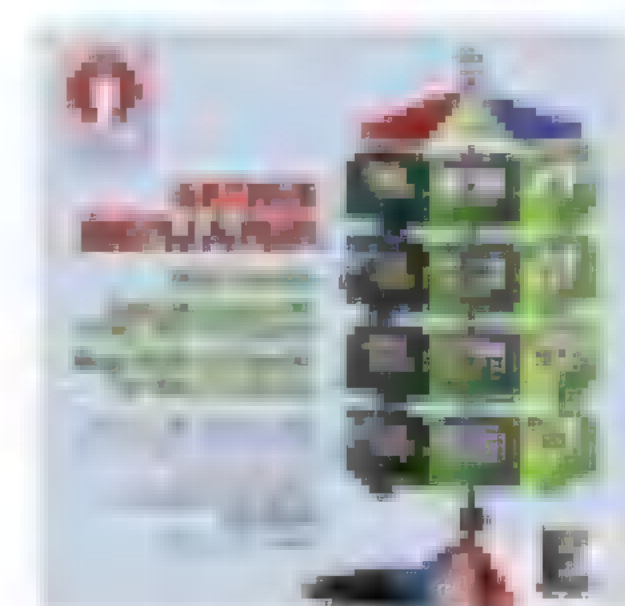
Violin Concerto^a. Romantic Fantasy^{ab}.

Elegy, Waltz and Toccata (Viola Concerto)^b

^aLorraine McAslan *vn* ^bSarah-Jane Bradley *va*

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / John Gibbons

Dutton Epoch © CDLX7279 (67' • DDD)



**Concertos from the creator
of the Jamaican Rumba**

I was mightily impressed with Arthur Benjamin's brooding, large-scale Symphony from 1944-45 (in Barry Wordsworth's eloquent account with the LPO – Lyrita, 6/07), and the three strongly appealing *concertante* offerings gathered here serve up further proof that there's a great deal more to this talented Sydney-born figure than the once ubiquitous *Jamaican Rumba*.

Take the substantial Violin Concerto. Completed in 1931 and dedicated to William Walton, it's a sparkily inventive, urgently expressive and immaculately crafted work that won the approbation of no less an authority than Hans Keller for its 'gift for melodic generation, for the growth of one tune out of another, or of several shapes out of an original motif'. Constant Lambert was similarly smitten, finding that the first movement, 'though written in rhapsodic form, convinces us by the firm lines of its construction'. Elsewhere, the *Elegy, Waltz and Toccata* turns out to be an orchestral version of the 1942 Viola Sonata. This meaty wartime offering was originally designed for William Primrose (who championed it assiduously) and shares something of the same nervous intensity as the aforementioned Symphony. Both solo instruments combine for the *Romantic Fantasy* (1936). Commissioned by another great viola player, Lionel Tertis, it also proves a genuine find, with writing that is conspicuously imaginative, resourceful and idiomatic. The opening theme, by the way, affectionately echoes the horn call from *In the Faery Hills* by Arnold Bax (to whom the score bears an inscription).

These performances have fine dash and infectious commitment about them, while the sound is extremely vivid to match (though the reverberant acoustic imparts a touch of

splashiness to any bigger *tuttis*). Do lend an ear to this most enterprising issue.

Andrew Achenbach

Brahms • Chopin • Liszt

Brahms Piano Concerto No 1, Op 15^b Chopin Ballade

No 3, Op 47^c Liszt Mephisto Waltz No 1, 'Der Tanz in

der Dorfschenke', S514^c Albéniz Iberia – Triana^a

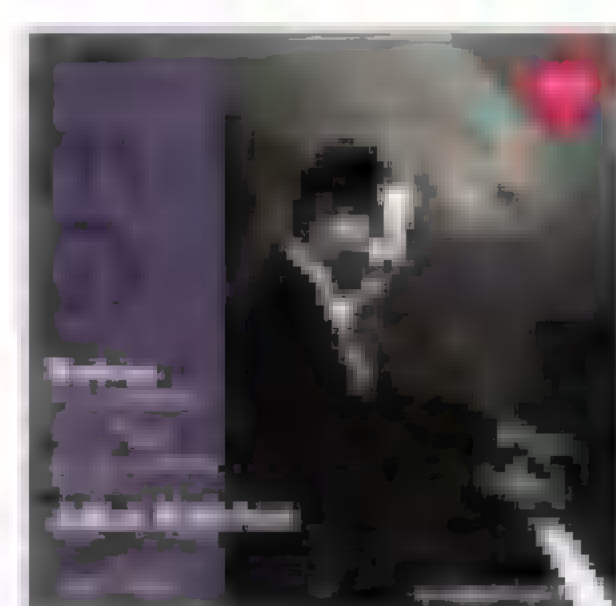
Schumann Waldszenen, Op 82 – Vogel als Prophet^a

Julius Katchen *pf*

^bBBC Symphony Orchestra / Rudolf Kempe

ICA Classics © ICAC5048 (76' • ADD). Recorded ^a1958,

^c1965, ^b1967. Includes Interview with Julius Katchen



**A reminder of an outsize
pianistic personality**

Julius Katchen was a pianist whose playing exuded a glamour and exuberance known to few. I have returned to his recordings again and again to be reminded of one of music's freest spirits, though one cut down, aged 42, in his prime. And if, as Katchen once claimed, the fluent communication of emotion is the performer's most elusive task, he succeeded to an extraordinary degree, a pianist with an outsize personality and technique who sent his audiences out into the night moved and awed by his distinctive eloquence and mastery. Every bar of Chopin's Third Ballade is illuminated by his stylistic luxuriance and audacity (try the tumultuous rush and glitter in the final bars) and even when almost engulfed by his own virtuosity, his performance of Liszt's First *Mephisto Waltz* is arguably the most wildly exciting on record.

His encores (issued for the first time on CD) are Schumann's 'Vogel als Prophet', too closely recorded but given with a special sense of its quizzical charm and oddity, and Albéniz's 'Triana', where excessive speed erases too much of its quintessential Spanish essence and character. Brahms was at the heart of Katchen's extensive repertoire and, finely partnered by Rudolf Kempe and the BBC SO, his unflagging brio and impetus are complemented by a moving and overtly emotional response to this daunting masterpiece. As a bonus we hear Katchen in interview, as racy as ever and including a surprising claim that José Iturbi was the

greatest Mozart pianist of his time. This record is a reminder and a remembrance of a tragic loss but an indelible musical force.

Bryce Morrison

Britten

Violin Concerto, Op 15^a. Double Concerto^{ab}.

Lachrymae, Op 48a^b

^aAnthony Marwood *vn* ^bLawrence Power *va*

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra / Ilan Volkov

Hyperion © CDA67801 (64' • DDD)



**String concertante works
by the young Benjamin Britten**

A neat coupling brings together the three works that Britten wrote for violin and/or viola with orchestra. The most substantial is the Violin Concerto, which is at last starting to establish its place alongside other major 20th-century concertos. Anthony Marwood, most associated with the contemporary violin concertos of Thomas Adès and Sally Beamish, makes the Britten sound as modern here as anybody. This is a lithe, spiky, rhythmical performance, bristling with satire in the Shostakovich style, at speeds well ahead of Britten's own. There is some lack of aural beauty – Marwood's tone gets thin at the top and the orchestra's sound is rather utilitarian – but every phrase is highly charged (Ilan Volkov has already shown himself a lively Britten interpreter in Glyndebourne's recent *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). In the closing pages, where the music lingers uncertainly between major and minor, this performance takes on quite an air of anxiety. Could this be a more telling depiction of the 1930s than the bittersweet sentiment found on the composer's own recording decades later?

In the 18-year-old Britten's Double Concerto, which only surfaced in 1997, Marwood and his viola colleague Lawrence Power prove to be the most outgoing soloists on disc so far. Alternatives are Kent Nagano's premiere recording with the starry duo of Gidon Kremer and Yuri Bashmet or Vladimir Jurowski's live LPO recording, but there is an extra spontaneity here that helps give this youthful music a welcome lift. With the rich-toned Power returning to give an eloquent performance



Compelling, Romantic: the Montreal Metropolitan Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin in Bruckner

of *Lachrymae*, this disc offers a trio of highly characterful performances.

Richard Fairman

Vn Conc – selected comparison:

Latbotky, ECO, Britten (10/89) (DECC) 473 715-2

Dbl Conc – selected comparisons:

Kremer, Bashmet, Hallé, Nagano (8/99) (APEX) 2564 67391-7

Schoeman, Zemtsov, LPO, Jurewski (6/09) (LPO) LPO0037

Bruckner

Symphony No 5

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Günter Wand

ICA Classics ⑤ DVD ICAD5049

(79' • NTSC 4:3 • PCM stereo • 0)

Recorded live at the Royal Albert Hall, London,

September 9, 1990. Includes Günter Wand interviewed by Michael Berkeley

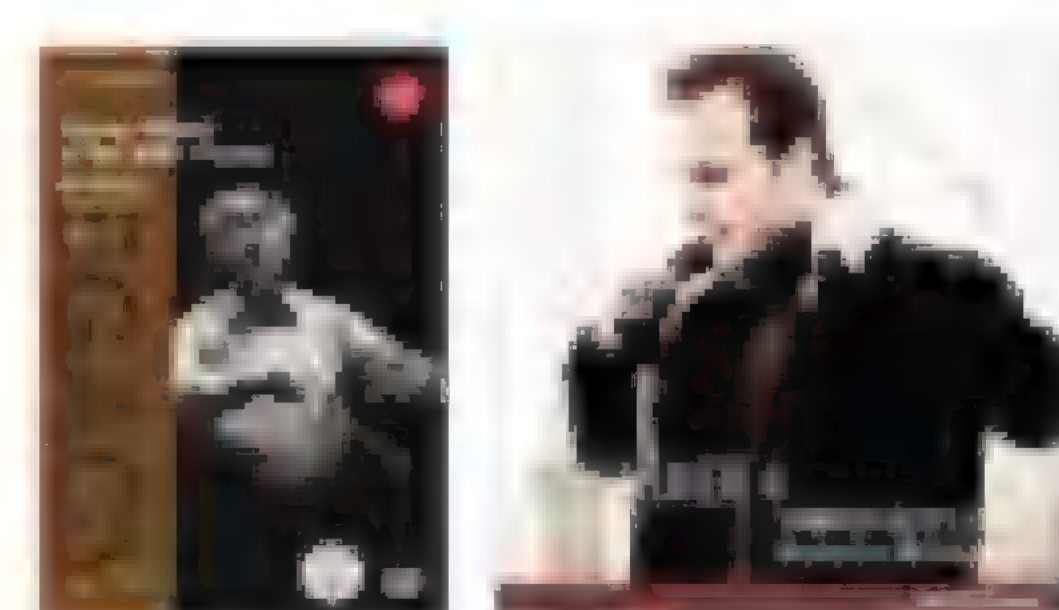
Bruckner

Symphony No 4, 'Romantic' (1881 version, ed Haas)

Montreal Metropolitan Orchestra /

Yannick Nézet-Séguin

ATMA Classique ⑤ ACD2 2667 (70' • DDD)



A 1990 Proms Fifth from Wand and a new Romantic from Nézet-Séguin in Montreal

It's difficult to believe when watching a very frail-looking Günter Wand conducting Bruckner's Fifth Symphony at the Proms in 1990 that a few years later (with the Berlin Philharmonic, for RCA, 7/97) he was still capable of delivering a strong, uncluttered and, most important, unmannered interpretation. A snippet of (German) interview settles his Brucknerian priorities more or less definitively. Yes, there's spirituality in this wonderful music, a metaphysical dimension if you like, but structure is a crucial issue – interconnecting themes are there as proof of that – and you ignore Bruckner's structures at your peril. Observing Wand at the head of the Fifth is like seeing an elderly man in love: virtually every phrase inspires a prior response – the raising of an eyebrow, the hint of a smile, eyes slowly scanning the relevant desks, the beat, always perfectly clear. No score is used and Wand's concentration doesn't falter for a moment. The BBC Symphony Orchestra delivers magnificently and the performance itself is everything one could wish for: cogent and well paced, direct, dramatic, warm, and fashioned without either unwarranted rubato or churchly affectations. Many readers will no

doubt remember individual BBC players on sight (I certainly do); they may even recognise themselves standing in the Arena (if you were wearing a T-shirt 'Save Ealing Common', then that was probably you!). The stereo sound quality is basically good though you may notice the odd spot of pre-echo. The camerawork is busier than I ideally like (sweat, pimples, scraping bows, period hairstyles, puffed-out cheeks pressed against mouthpieces – do we really need any of it?) but the play of expressions on Wand's face is worth all of the rest. A real treat.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin's way with Bruckner is of a very different order but well worth troubling over. His Bruckner series with the Orchestre Métropolitain (Symphonies Nos 7, 8 and 9 are already available – 6/07, 5/10, 12/08) now features a lyrical and often exciting account of the Fourth, its general mood keenly suggestive of the work's nickname, *Romantic*. Nézet-Séguin shies away from weighty sound blocks or dense textures; rather, he inflects the musical line according to its expressive place in the overall scheme of things and isn't afraid to dip the tempo at crucial corners, so that we can better appreciate the view. At 11'04" into the finale, for example, after an especially telling

diminuendo, he pulls back dramatically to emphasise the gesture that follows. The *Scherzo* is full of energy, though again its most lyrical aspects come off best – at 1'50", where the strings' counterpoint is warmly stressed, as is the clarinet's response soon afterwards. The *Andante* is equally successful, especially the *crescendo*-ing strings above quiet drum taps towards the end of the movement (at 15'38"). Which only leaves me to comment on Nézet-Séguin's flexibly handled first movement, and the rapt quiet playing of the Orchestre Métropolitain (though the brass-dominated climaxes are also very effective, and the lead horn, Louis-Philippe Marsolais, is superb). Robert Haas's 1936 edition is used. Very different to Wand's Bruckner style but still compelling. **Rob Cowan**

Kalinnikov

Symphonies – No 1; No 2

Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra / Kees Bakels

BIS © BIS-CD1155 (77' • DDD)

Recorded 2000



Daylight at last for BIS's 2000 Malaysian Kalinnikov

Vassily Kalinnikov's First Symphony of 1894-95 contains at least one tune to die for: beam to 1'08" in the opening *Allegro moderato* and marvel at the full-throated lyricism of a second subject as naggingly memorable as any in a Russian Romantic symphony. It's no great surprise when it reappears in the finale, which is otherwise disappointingly humdrum and singularly fails to build on the achievement of the wonderfully atmospheric slow movement and splendidly boisterous *Scherzo*. Completed in 1897, the Second Symphony follows the same groundplan but displays a far more convincing thematic unity (the initial idea is cleverly reworked in all four movements). What's more, its unquenchable melodic flow and skilful orchestration afford genuine delight from start to finish. Sadly, we can but wonder at what further treasures Kalinnikov might have given us: he died of tuberculosis four years later aged just 34.

I'm happy to be able to report that Kees Bakels presides over athletic, shapely and involving performances of both works. True, Svetlanov's fiery Melodiya versions with the USSR SO may evince rather more in the way of authentically Slavic tang but there's not a hint of routine about the Dutchman's painstakingly prepared, bright-eyed readings; indeed, the playing of the Malaysian PO has both immaculate finish and engaging spirit to commend it. So, a thoroughly enjoyable coupling, boasting stunningly natural sound and balance. According to the booklet, the sessions within Kuala Lumpur's Petronas Hall

took place way back in December 2000: why on earth have BIS been sitting on the mastertapes for so long? **Andrew Achenbach**

Sym No 1 – selected comparison:

USSR SO, Svetlanov (REGI) RRC1351

Sym No 2 – selected comparison:

USSR SO, Svetlanov (3/98th) (WARN) 5101 12383-2

Moeran • Ireland

Ireland Sarnia (orch Yates) Moeran Symphony No 2 (realised and compl Yates). Overture for a Festival (orch Newton)

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Martin Yates
Dutton Epoch © CDLX7281 (59' • DDD)



Moeran's symphonic sketches elaborated by Yates

Ernest John ('Jack') Moeran laboured over his never-to-be-finished Second Symphony for some 11 years until his death in Kenmare, County Kerry, on December 1, 1950. By May 1947 he seems to have decided upon a one-movement structure in four sections following the example of Sibelius's Seventh Symphony. Indeed, around the same period, Lionel Hill (in his touching memoir of his close friendship with the composer entitled *Lonely Waters*) tantalisingly recalls hearing Moeran play through the entire score on the piano ('Oh, it was breathtaking in its sweep, very Irish in feeling'). Now the conductor Martin Yates (a pupil of Richard Arnell) has fashioned the surviving sketches into a powerful 33-minute symphonic edifice. It certainly makes for a fascinating and rewarding voyage of discovery, the inspiration often touchingly heartfelt (nowhere more so than in the third-movement *Adagietto*) and gripping in its scope of ambition. Moreover, connoisseurs will have a high old time pinning down the wealth of references to other pieces in Moeran's output (I won't spoil the fun).

Yates is also responsible for the sumptuous arrangement of Ireland's masterly and magical *Sarnia* (a likeable companion for the immaculately idiomatic piano solo original), and the disc concludes with another gem of a Moeran completion, namely Rodney Newton's idiomatic orchestration of a piano score (undated, but almost certainly from the first half of the 1930s) labelled simply 'Overture' and featuring material destined for the towering Symphony in G minor and cherishable Sinfonietta. True 'EJ' fans shouldn't ignore this splendidly performed and ripely engineered Dutton anthology.

Andrew Achenbach

Mozart

Concerto for Flute and Harp, K299^a.

Sinfonia concertante, K297^b

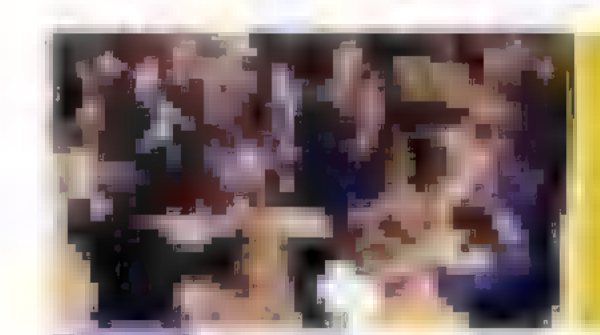
^aJacques Zoon *fl* ^bLucas Macías Navarro *ob*

^bAlessandro Carbonare *cl* ^bGuillaume Santana *bn*

^bAlessio Allegrini *hn* ^aLetizia Belmondo *hp*

Orchestra Mozart / Claudio Abbado

DG © 477 9329GH (55' • DDD)



Abbado turns to the concertos for multiple instruments

With soloists from his own Orchestra Mozart, Claudio Abbado here demonstrates formidably their virtuosity and sensitivity in two of Mozart's *concertante* works involving wind instruments. These were both works written when Mozart visited Paris in 1778. The Flute and Harp Concerto was commissioned by the Duc de Guines, himself a keen flautist, while his daughter played the harp. Inevitably the flute takes pride of place but the role of the harp is also important, making a delightful combination.

In this performance the flautist is Jacques Zoon, the only non-Italian among the soloists on the disc. The interweaving of soloists is a delight, with Letizia Belmondo on the harp. They are well balanced against the orchestra, so that the glorious melody in the slow movement comes out ravishingly. The Orchestra Mozart here has a modest complement of strings (10-10-7-6-4), the players obviously chosen carefully by Abbado. The springing of the trotting theme in the finale rounds the performance off perfectly.

The *Sinfonia concertante* for wind may not be a supreme Mozart masterpiece to match the one with violin and viola (K364) but it has many delights in such a performance as this, with the wind quartet of oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn. The finale is totally delicious, again light in its trotting rhythm. Curiously, though written in Paris, it was not performed as planned when a rival composer, Giuseppe Maria Cambini, persuaded the impresario, Legros, to substitute a *sinfonia concertante* of his own.

Though the booklet-notes do not include any information about the Orchestra Mozart, let alone the talented soloists, their crisp precision of ensemble speaks for itself.

Edward Greenfield

Panufnik

'Symphonic Works, Vol 4'

Symphonies – No 2, 'Sinfonia elegiaca';

No 3, 'Sinfonia sacra'; No 10

Konzerthaus Orchestra, Berlin / Łukasz Borowicz

CPO © CPO777 683-2 (62' • DDD)



Borowicz's Panufnik survey reaches its fourth volume

How come Andrzej Panufnik's *Sinfonia elegiaca* and *Sinfonia sacra* feel emotionally and intellectually satisfying while his Symphony No 10 doesn't quite meet the grade either way?

Answer that and you solve the enigma of Panufnik's approach to composition – at once coolly detached and explicitly heartfelt.

Panufnik believed in what he termed 'the beauty of geometry' and in both symphonies a point in time arrives where harmony controlled by defamiliarising geometry (harmony at a tangent) flips over into harmonies obviously aimed at pressing more old-school expressive buttons. Performances live or die around how keenly conductors perceive, and make something of, those gear-changes, and Łukasz Borowicz clearly has the expressive geometry of Panufnik's thinking under his fingers.

The most striking expressive turbo-thrust is in *Sacra*'s third movement, 'Vision III'. After an opening movement sketched around triadic brass fanfares that abruptly jump-cut into the second movement's outlying, barely audible string music, this third movement slices ever deeper into the orchestral tissue. The Konzerthausorchester percussionists hold nothing back as percussion clatter circles the orchestra, pummelling against gesturally naked flourishes in brass and strings.

And then you begin to realise that Panufnik is taking the classical ideal of 'exposition' thrillingly literally. Until these raw suggestions of material are given harmonic legs at 4'05", and thus find their place within a directional argument, they are like sketches anticipating a developed context. If symphonic form was always about pulling together diverse material and then arguing the toss, Panufnik found a canny way to pour new wine into vintage bottles.

Elegiaca slots together similarly and Borowicz understands perfectly when Panufnik's dual-purpose material needs dramatising and when best to leave well alone. And the Tenth? Panufnik's stall isn't set out as transparently and the narrative falls flat. And there's not much anyone, Borowicz included, can do about that. **Philip Clark**

Reger

'The Romantic Violin Concerto, Vol 11'

Violin Concerto, Op 101. Two Romances, Op 50

Tanja Becker-Bender *vn*

Konzerthaus Orchestra, Berlin / Lothar Zagrosek

Hyperion © CDA67892 (75' • DDD)



A second recording for Reger's mammoth Violin Concerto

Improbably, two recordings of this mammoth Concerto have arrived within six months. It's a problem piece, as Reger seems always to have known, as he worked it out in his head on long train journeys before writing it down between June 1907 and April 1908. An intention to create a symphonic three-movement violin concerto in the tradition of the Beethoven and Brahms masterpieces was there from the



Flute, harp and baton: Jacques Zoon, Letizia Belmondo and Claudio Abbado

beginning, but as his 'giant baby' continued to grow you sense from his references to it that he was not confident of success. With a duration of not far short of an hour it surpasses the scale of its great predecessors by a third, which is a problem for a start; and granted that a certain unstoppable quality is part of Reger's character, his unwillingness to practise economy as a force for good has to be counted a failing.

Aimez-vous Reger? If you have an interest in him at all you will find rewards in his Violin Concerto, which is full of craft and a lyricism often of inspired quality. 'I lay the main stress on vivid melody,' he said, and he meant every note of it. Together with the earlier Piano Concerto, which does get an occasional public performance, these 'symphonic concertos' take the place of the symphony Reger never wrote. You will not hear the Violin Concerto in the concert hall in a month of Sundays. Until these recordings came along the giant baby had become a sleeping giant. So let us be grateful for them.

But which? Subscribing as I do to the belief that the composer knew best – not always true, but worth defending – this account of Reger's original for Hyperion's 'Romantic

Violin Concerto' series should arguably have first claim. Tanja Becker-Bender is more than equal to the demands of the solo part, and Lothar Zagrosek's masterly articulation of Reger's *Klangstrom* (stream of sound), in all its transparency and modulated colour and variety of incident is, if anything, an even more distinguished contribution. Splendid recording too, from the Jesus-Christus-Kirche in Berlin, with depth and a balance of clarity and warmth that is just right.

'No, that's impossible. I have thought a great deal about it; the work is and remains a monster' – Reger to the violinist Carl Flesch, who had suggested cuts. For a long time the Concerto had a troubled performance history and went through soloists in a succession of one-night stands. But the loyal Adolf Busch, trusted by Reger, sought by means of a slimmer reorchestrated version to improve the Concerto's chances, above all (one imagines) with orchestras and concert promoters, who would have the business of rehearsing it. 'The music has remained unchanged,' Busch insisted, and it was the premiere recording of that version, on Telos, which was my introduction to the Concerto last September. The booklet-

writer here for Hyperion will have no truck with it, making out that Busch's 'attempt at salvage' distorted and even destroyed the character of the original. This seems to me tendentious and on the evidence of what I've heard clearly wrong. Kolja Lesing's timings, in an equally close collaboration with a gifted conductor and the Göttingen SO, are within a minute of those on the new Hyperion, with Lesing, an exceptional artist, an even more persuasive interpreter than Becker-Bender, by a short call. In the two Romances he is certainly the more expressive and interesting player.

Reger didn't live to renew his language, and in persuading himself he could go on from Brahms, with knobs on, to create a durable alternative to modern music he was on to a loser. When I get these recordings down from the shelf, however, it is to the Concerto's slow movement that I return: there I find the best of him and all reservations disappear. **Stephen Plaistow**

Selected comparison:

Lesing, Göttingen SO, Mueller (9/11) (TELO) TLS097

Rota

Cello Concertos – No 1; No 2

Silvia Chiesa VC

RAI National Symphony Orchestra / Corrado Rovaris
Sony Classical © 88697 92410-2 (50' • DDD)

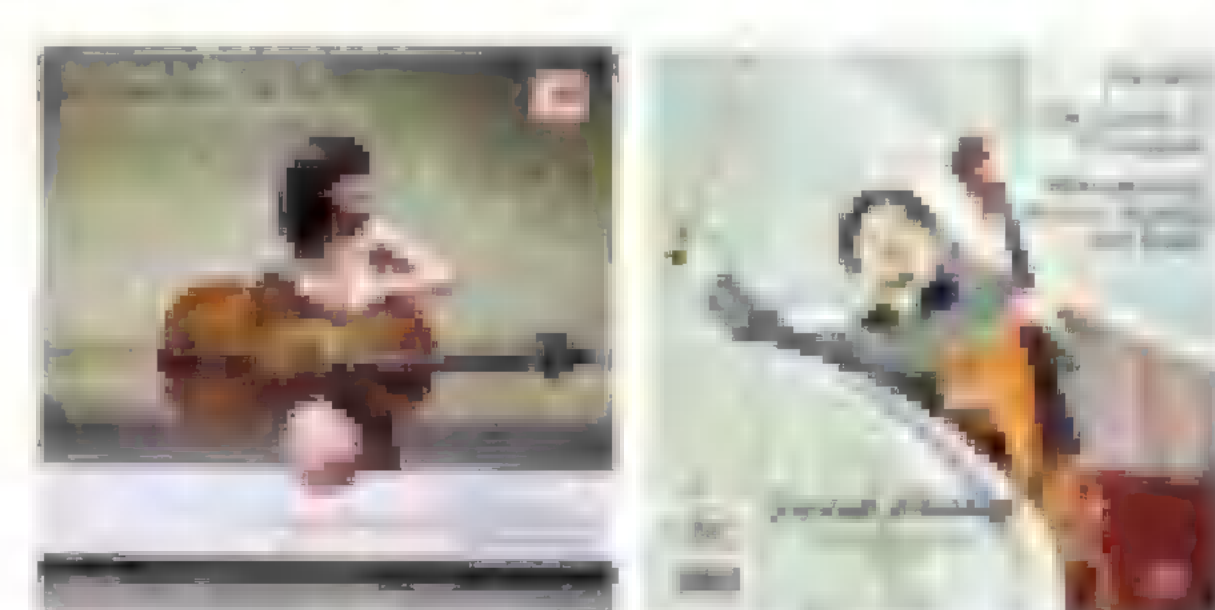
Rota

Cello Concertos^a – No 1; No 2.

Il gattopardo – suite for small orchestra

^a**Friedrich Kleinhapl** VC

Augsburg Philharmonic Orchestra / Dirk Kaftan
Ars Produktion © ARS38 105 (65' • DDD/DSD)



Concertante concert-hall works from a film-music legend

Nino Rota was a celebrated film composer but, on the evidence of these two cello concertos, he is less skilled in creating larger musical structures for his themes, with much use of sequential repetition. The First Concerto opens with a flamboyant first movement and plenty of opportunities for solo virtuosity but rather less in the way of melodic memorability. The *Larghetto cantabile* invites a passionate response from both soloists but one keeps hoping in vain for a big tune to arrive. By far the best movement is the finale, which charges along infectiously with some charming woodwind detail in a brief fugato. This would stand up well on its own. The Second Concerto opens with a vigorous impetus over a repeated rhythmic background and here the main theme is quite catchy, if again repetitive. The theme-and-variations slow movement has an elegantly romantic theme. The composer displays

at times almost the skill of contrasting orchestral colour which Tchaikovsky, for instance, managed so masterfully in his variations. However again, Rota's finale, which is comparatively brief, communicates by the sheer energy of the performance.

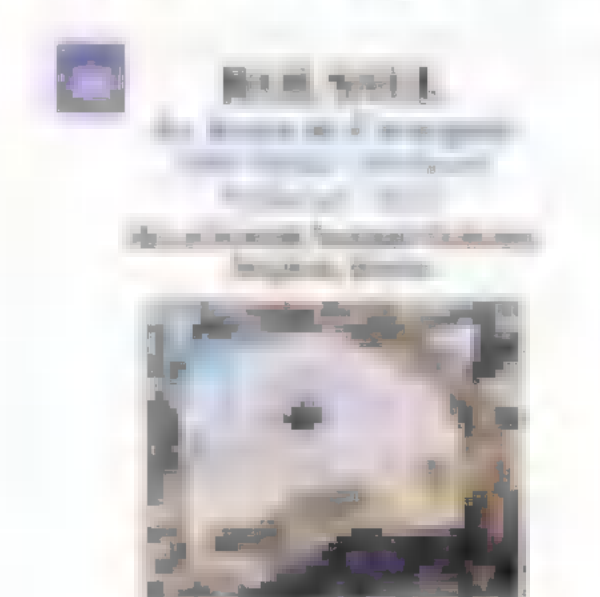
Of the two versions, it must be said that the Ars Produktion SACD is a clear first choice. On Sony, Corrado Rovaris and his soloist make a good deal of their opportunities throughout both works. But Friedrich Kleinhapl is a soloist of even more striking personality and Dirk Kaftan finds more character in the orchestral accompaniments, particularly the slow movement of the Second Concerto, which has more vivid woodwind colouring. The string-playing throughout also has more character. What confirms the preference is the inclusion of half an hour of the ballet music *Il gattopardo*, easily tuneful and with plenty of character, and played with splendid rhythmic verve. **Ivan March**

Roussel

Le festin de l'araignée, Op 17.

Padmâvatī – Suite No 1; Suite No 2

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Stéphane Denève
Naxos © 8 572243 (55' • DDD)



Denève and the RSN0 complete their Roussel series

Roussel's balletic exposé of seething life in the insect world receives a vibrant performance from the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under Stéphane Denève, completing their five-volume survey of Roussel's orchestral music. Given that none of the creatures assembled in Roussel's entomological drama makes any noise that could be replicated in music, his *Le festin de l'araignée* ('The Spider's Banquet') is all the more skilful in giving a general idea of their characters, anthropomorphising them and tracking their tussles for superiority. The slithering music for the fruit worms is an obvious example, as is the aggression of the praying mantises and the brief flight of fancy enjoyed by the mayfly, the ballet ending with the mayfly's poignant funeral and a return to peaceful woodland coexistence. The music, which is couched in Roussel's own brand of impressionism, is radiantly orchestrated and, through its descriptive powers, holds its own without the visual elements that a staged performance would provide.

While there are still hints of impressionism in *Padmâvatī*, the music is much more strongly influenced by Roussel's experiences on an extended trip to India and south east Asia that he made with his wife in 1909. The two-act opera-ballet, from which the RSN0 plays the 'Prélude', 'Danse guerrière' and 'Danse des femmes esclaves' from Act 1 and the 'Prélude' and 'Danse et pantomime' from

Act 2, is imbued with Hindu scale forms, syncopated rhythms, exotic melody and the stark gestures apt to a tale of savagery and sacrifice, graphically defined in this performance. **Geoffrey Norris**

Saint-Saëns

'Élan – Ballet Music from Operas'

Les Barbares – Prologue; Prélude, Act 3; Air de ballet; Farandole. Ascanio – Entrée du Maître des Jeux; Venus, Junon et Pallas; Diane, Dryades et Naiades; Bacchus et les Bacchantes; Apparition de Phoebus Apollo et des neuf Muses; Phoebus prend sa lyre évoque l'Amour; L'Amour fait apparaître Psyché; Ensemble de Phoebus, Diane, Erigone, Nicoea et Bacchus avec les Muses, les Nymphes et les Bacchantes; Variation de l'Amour; Un page personnifiant le Dragon des Hespérides apporte la pomme d'or; Final: Les Déesses, Bacchantes, Naiades et Dryades; Apothéose. Etienne Marcel – Entrée des Ecoliers et des Ribauds; Musette guerrière; Pavane; Valse; Entrée des Bohémiens et Bohémiennes; Final. Henry VIII – Danse de la Gipsy; La Fête du Houblon

Orchestra Victoria / Guillaume Tourniaire

Melba © MR301130 (73' • DDD/DSD)



French conductor for first recordings of ballet music

This is a strange one, but the music does at least have rarity value. It is safe to say that, with the exception of *Samson et Dalila*, Saint-Saëns's 13 operas have not exactly proved irresistible to the general public or to operatic producers and musical directors, and these ballet numbers probably give only a vague taste of what *Henry VIII*, *Ascanio*, *Etienne Marcel* and *Les Barbares* might be like as complete stage experiences. The dances are, after all, merely *divertissements* interposed between buttresses of sung drama and are not necessarily integral to the main action.

There is little to get your teeth into here, characterfully though it is played, but on a certain level much of the music has its attractions. Being Saint-Saëns, everything is crafted with the utmost professionalism and orchestrated with clarity and polish. On occasion, as in some of the *Etienne Marcel* pieces, you feel he is operating on autopilot, but then for *Les Barbares* – set in 105BC against a background of conflict between the Gallo-Romans and the Barbarians – he pulls a substantial Prelude of real emotional power and theatrical flair out of the bag. This is not strictly ballet music; nor is the shorter Prelude to Act 3, but the two ensuing dance numbers are appealingly energetic. Perhaps the most interesting sequence is the one from *Ascanio*, where Saint-Saëns exercises his skill in echoing the Baroque and also taps seams of gaiety, limpid delicacy and rhythmic ebullience. **Geoffrey Norris**

Schumann

Symphonies - No 1, 'Spring', Op 38;

No 3, 'Rhenish', Op 97

Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen /

Paavo Järvi

RCA Red Seal ④ 88697 96431-2 (63' • DDD/DSD)



Chamber-sized Schumann from Järvi's Bremen band

A telling litmus test for performances of the *Rhenish* is the gently flowing, song-like third movement (marked simply *Nicht schnell*), which sorts out those who prefer to underline the lyrical aspects of Schumann's writing from those who don't. Paavo Järvi evidently does: he starts lightly and breezily, and when he reaches the tripping second subject for strings, gently accelerates. Fabio Luisi (with the Vienna SO) has a similar notion, though he makes more of a meal of the tempo-shift, whereas neither Norrington (with the Stuttgart RSO) nor Dausgaard (with the Swedish CO) alter the pulse. Theirs are energetic performances, prioritising clarity in music that is too often (wrongly) accused of sounding overly stodgy.

Järvi is always animated and alert to the music's expressive potential: he achieves the best of both worlds. His tempi are swift but never rushed; he runs the cursor along significant inner voices (these are extremely transparent readings), and his judgement of key musical transitions attests to genuine musical intuition. He doesn't balk at making some fairly unconventional interpretative decisions: in the *Scherzo* of the First Symphony, for example, he doubles the tempo for the first Trio and takes the second 'in tempo', which works beautifully. Järvi allows the same work's *Larghetto* to sing unaffectedly and the *Rhenish*'s 'cathedral' fourth movement is imposing without sounding portentous. The resourceful Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen is evidently manned by players who listen very closely to one another (these performances are rather like 'chamber music writ large'), and the sound is superbly balanced. So, an unreserved recommendation. **Rob Cowan**

Sym No 3 - selected comparisons:

Swedish CO, Dausgaard (1/09) (BIS) BIS-SACD1619

Vienna SO, Luisi (9/10) (ORFÉ) C717 102H

Stuttgart Rad SO, Norrington (HANS) CD93 160

Shostakovich • Shchedrin

Shchedrin Piano Concerto No 5 Shostakovich

Piano Concertos - No 1, Op 35^a; No 2, Op 102

^aTimur Martynov tpt Denis Matsuev pf

Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre / Valery Gergiev

Mariinsky ④ MAR0509 (74' • DDD/DSD)



Matsuev competes with his own earlier recordings

For the most part, collectors familiar with pianist Denis Matsuev's earlier recordings of Shostakovich's First Concerto and Shchedrin's Fifth will find these 2009/10 versions boasting equal excitement and drive, although they are less polished and incisive, and not so well balanced. In the Shostakovich, for example, the Mariinsky's trumpet soloist doesn't quite match the fatter tone and stronger sustaining power of the St Petersburg first-desk player, while the Mariinsky strings lack the robustness and full-throated definition distinguishing their St Petersburg counterparts: compare both recordings of the *Lento* movement's introduction and hear for yourself.

Admittedly, the Mariinsky's whirlwind Shostakovich finale coda scores over St Petersburg for sheer adrenalin rush. Yet under Jansons, the mesmerising ostinatos and phrase displacements of the Shchedrin's *Allegro assai* consistently retain momentum, energy and shimmering lightness that become more generalised and heavier as they progress under Gergiev's watch. The slow movement's extensive lyrical solo piano part is no less eloquent here but Matsuev's phrasing is more animated and less tapered in the earlier reading. However, everything comes easily together in Shostakovich's Second Concerto, where both soloist and conductor reveal the music's disarming melodic wit in a relaxed, unpressured manner and deliver a heartfelt, touchingly inflected reading of the *Andante* that allows the cellos plenty of room to sing out. A fine disc overall, even if the young Matsuev is competing with his younger self. **Jed Distler**

Shostakovich Pf Conc No 1 - selected comparison:

Matsuev, St Petersburg PO, Temirkanov

(RCA) 88697 00233-2

Shchedrin Pf Conc No 5 - selected comparison:

Matsuev, Bavarian Rad SO, Jansons

(2/06) (SONY) 82876 70326-2

Shostakovich

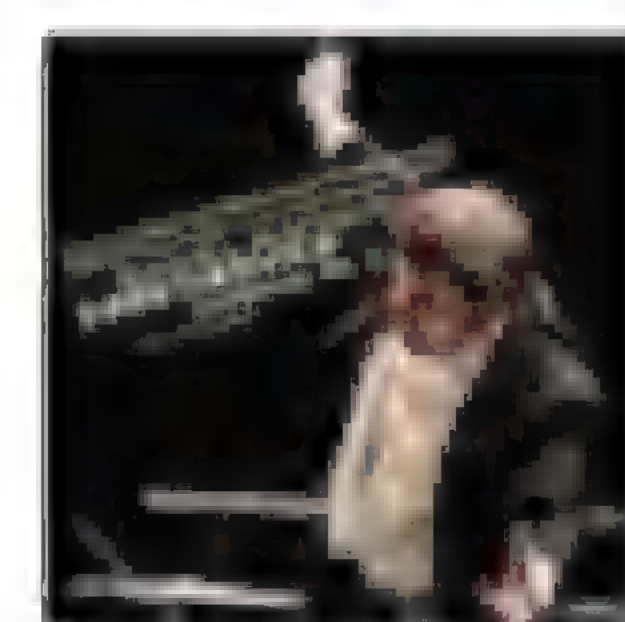
Symphony No 4

Rhein State Philharmonic Orchestra; Mainz State

Philharmonic Orchestra / Daniel Raiskin

C-Avi Music ④ 8553235 (66' • DDD)

Recorded live, March 2009



German orchestras unite for the suppressed Fourth

In 2001 Valery Gergiev directed members of his own Kirov (Mariinsky) and Rotterdam orchestras in an unexceptionable live recording of the *Leningrad* Symphony but there is at least as much to commend in Daniel Raiskin's alliance of two much less familiar ensembles in the Fourth. Since Shostakovich's centenary year his symphonies have made belated inroads into the discographies of several German orchestras, bands whose tonal refinement can work against the brutalist tension of these

scores. Not so here. Sourced from concerts given in Koblenz and Mainz in March 2009, the music-making reflects great credit on the players and their viola player turned conductor. The booklet, a good one, lets us know that Raiskin grew up with the celebrated Kondrashin recording, his musicologist father, Iosif, having been present at Kondrashin's belated first performance.

Granted, the Teutonic instrumental soloists may lack the weight and tonal specificity of their counterparts in the Moscow Philharmonic of 1961, let alone the particular ironic slant imparted by Gennady Rozhdestvensky in his broader readings. That said, Raiskin's sense of direction never falters. Like Vasily Petrenko, whose Naxos cycle has not yet reached No 4, there is a special emphasis on rhythmic definition and clarity. While the interpretation as such is not startlingly original, the tempi mainstream, Raiskin obtains a freshness of texture that's undeniably appealing, evidence of thorough preparation and intense commitment. Best of all, the temptation to rush or otherwise undersell the finale's titanic final climax is firmly resisted, with Shostakovich's harmonically static fade-out, interminable in some hands, sounding as atmospheric as it seldom does. The applause breaks in only after a decent interval. With clean, close-up SWR sound engineering to disguise the fact that the performance is a composite, set down over two nights in two different venues, this is one 'sleeper' well worth trying. A valid, sometimes unexpectedly emotive alternative to the heftier sonorities of Gergiev and Co. **David Gutman**

Selected comparisons:

Kirov Orch, Rotterdam PO, Gergiev

(3/06) (PHIL) 470 841-2PM5

WDR SO, Bychkov (2/07) (AVIE) AV2114

Moscow PO, Kondrashin (4/07) (MELO) MELCD100 1065

Stuttgart Rad SO, Boreyko (6/07) (HANS) CD93 193

Shostakovich • Takemitsu



Shostakovich Symphony No 5

Takemitsu From me flows what you call time

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Yutaka Sado

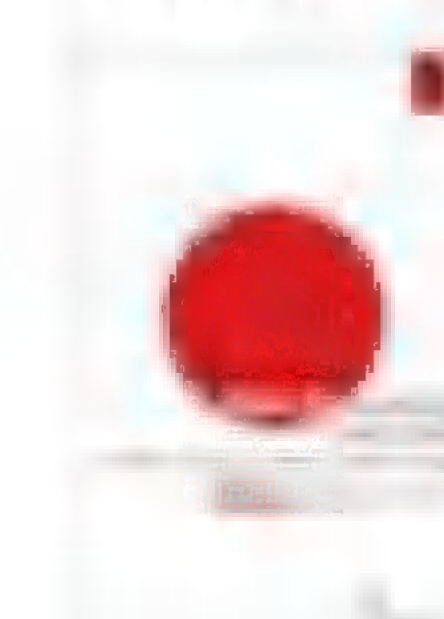
EuroArts ④ DVD 205 8744; ④ 205 8748

(91' + 16' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • PCM stereo,

DTS 5.1 & DTS-HD MA • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Berlin, May 2011

Bonus: Interview with Yutaka Sado



A gala concert in aid of Japanese tsunami relief

Only a DVD culled from a live concert could throw up the unlikely pairing of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony with *From me flows what you call time* for five percussionists and orchestra by Tōru Takemitsu, premiered during Carnegie Hall's centenary celebrations in 1991.



From me flows what you call time: Yutaka Sado and Berlin Philharmonic percussionists

Stretched over a 35-minute canvas, with only an occasional climactic peak, Takemitsu subverts the proud triumphalism expected of celebratory compositions. His meditative inquest into the flow of time is like an anti-fanfare – a sonic seance summoning back the spiritual imprint of a century's music etched into the walls.

I like Takemitsu best when there's rigorous tension put between his soft-focus, stylised figurations and structural sleights-of-hand that lend his Debussian turns-of-phrase subliminal muscle. Here the balance is perfect. Takemitsu claims that his score ought to give 'the impression of complete improvisation' but I wonder if the implication that improvisation somehow equals randomness is really what he meant. Improvisation can impose order too; Takemitsu's meticulous, open-ended structure instead reboots itself on the fly, using set-piece woodwind solos as landmarks. This illusion of improvisational spontaneity is very composerly. Yutaka Sado is confident enough to carve the space up like a dislocating procession: tinkling percussive charms fade back into the silence that birthed them, held in place by freewheeling logic.

The percussionists, drawn from the BPO ranks, wear the colours of the Tibetan flag, and talking of landmark moments, pull ribbons that

shake wind chimes suspended from the ceiling. But such windows of structural solidity are mirages inside music that otherwise keeps you alert and listening precisely because there isn't much to hold on to – it's an invitation to listen hard and lose yourself in sound and time. The harder you listen, the further you lose yourself.

After Takemitsu, Shostakovich's urgent 'listen to this' message, each harmonic sidestep loaded with inference, is a shock. I like the dynamic detail Sado lavishes on the first movement, while the ardent power of the slow movement rhymes nicely with a suitably stony-faced finale. And another sound reason to buy this DVD: all proceeds will be donated to the Japanese Red Cross to help victims of the 2011 tsunami. **Philip Clark**

Tchaikovsky

Violin Concerto, Op 35^a. Sérénade mélancolique, Op 26^a. Valse-scherzo, Op 34^a. Souvenir d'un lieu cher, Op 42^b

James Ehnes ^{vn} **Sydney Symphony Orchestra / Vladimir Ashkenazy** ^{pf}

Onyx ® ONYX4076 (70' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Opera House, Sydney,

December 2010



James Ehnes goes up against Julia Fischer in Tchaikovsky

James Ehnes's programme, complementing the Concerto with the rest of Tchaikovsky's solo violin music, follows Julia Fischer, who issued exactly the same sequence in 2006 even to the extent of having her conductor (Yakov Kreizberg) doubling as pianist in *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*.

Both Fischer and Ehnes are very fine violinists with a strong feeling for Tchaikovsky's music, and both possess the refined musicianship to be able to present the Concerto's transitions and cadenza-like passages in the most convincing, compelling way. The sound of Ehnes's violin is especially full and expressive; it's not the kind of tone that Tchaikovsky would have recognised but it sounds gorgeous and allows him to rise to the concerto's lyrical high spots with considerable intensity. Even his muted tone in the *Canzonetta* is exceptionally warm and resonant. He clearly enjoys demonstrating his ability as a virtuoso, making this one of the most exciting accounts of the finale I can remember, with the Sydney Symphony responding to the verve of the solo playing with exhilarating vigour and deftness.

Of the shorter pieces, the *Sérénade mélancolique* is wonderfully dark and atmospheric but I found the *Valse-scherzo* just slightly heavy-handed, especially when heard alongside Fischer's playful, witty performance.

A lighter tone and style would also have benefited the *Mélodie* from *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* but the preceding *Scherzo* is splendidly done, with Ashkenazy's part, in his hands much more than an accompaniment, contributing largely to the overall effect. **Duncan Druce**

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

J Fischer, Russian Nat Orch, Kreizberg

(4/07) (PENT) PTC5186 095

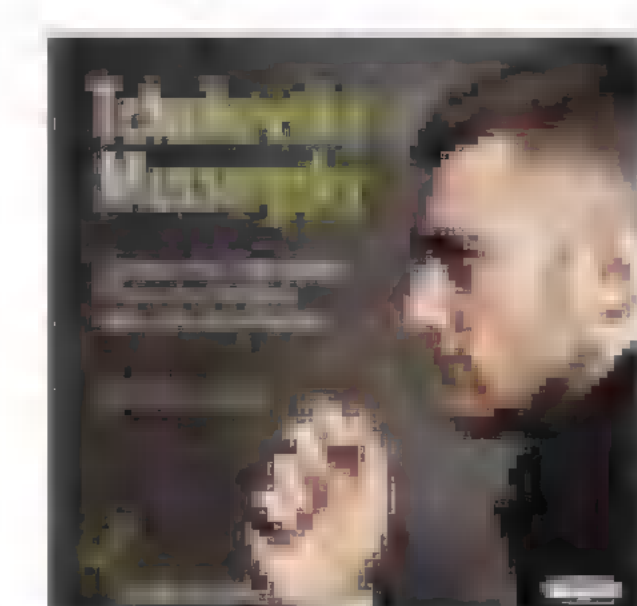
Tchaikovsky · Mussorgsky

Mussorgsky Night on the Bare Mountain (original version). Pictures at an Exhibition (orch Ravel)

Tchaikovsky Symphony No 2, 'Little Russian'

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra / Kirill Karabits

Onyx 8 ONYX4074 (82' • DDD)



Ukrainian sonorities resound in a Bournemouth Little Russian

Ukrainian themes are at the core of Tchaikovsky's Second Symphony, the *Little Russian*, and Karabits – himself a Ukrainian – makes the distinction in the way that he greets them. Notice how he plays up the rhetoric of the first movement, swelling with pride at each big thematic statement. If there's a single distinguishing feature of this generously filled disc it's Karabits's determination to convey the grass-roots spirit of the themes which breathe life into these pieces, be it the little wedding march recalled in the second movement of the Tchaikovsky or the eminently hummable folksong, 'The Crane', which so readily transforms into a tub-thumping apotheosis in the finale, piccolo leading the marching band. This is Tchaikovsky's 'Great Gate' to the Ukraine and the parallel is not lost on Karabits.

Characteristically, he is more mindful of the pianistic cragginess of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* than of Ravel's finesse. A performance like Simon Rattle's with the Berlin Philharmonic rejoices in that finesse and piquancy but its 'Frenchness' has one forgetting the source material, where Karabits is big-boned and earthy, and positively encourages coarser-grained sonorities from his Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. He even opts for the contentious bass drum displacements in the closing pages of the 'Great Gate of Kiev'. Most interpreters ignore the metric ambiguity and place those two thwacks firmly on the beat – but Karabits savours the unruliness of the gesture.

There's plenty more where that came from in Mussorgsky's startling original version of *Night on the Bare Mountain*. It's hard returning to Rimsky-Korsakov's benign 're-composition' of this piece once you've heard how much of its originality – texturally, structurally, harmonically – was neutered by

the well-meaning but misguided Russian master. Mussorgsky's elemental untidiness is integral to this witches' Sabbath.

Rimsky entirely missed the point. And so, resoundingly, says Karabits. **Edward Seckerson**

Pictures at an Exhibition – selected comparison:

BPO, Rattle (7/08) (EMI) 517582-2

Tchaikovsky

Symphony No 4, Op 36. Francesca da Rimini, Op 32

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra /

Andris Nelsons

Orfeo 8 C860 111A (64' • DDD)

Recorded live at Symphony Hall, Birmingham,

June 2011



More Tchaikovsky from Nelsons' CBSO: now the Fourth

It's really hard to fault any of Nelsons's choices here. Like Tchaikovsky, he is a classicist at heart: nothing is overcooked, nothing distorted; positively no histrionics. There is an integrity and an inevitability about the phrasing and expressivity is always at the behest of good taste. But with Nelsons's integrity comes a degree of rationality and circumspection which eschews theatricality. The big moments are exciting but still a notch short of thrilling – partly because their effect is so calculated as to leave no room for that unsolicited rush of adrenalin. In this respect Nelsons reminds me more and more of Jansons. For some that will be the ultimate accolade.

Beauty is plentiful in the Fourth Symphony. Slipping into the second subject group, Nelsons lends enchantment to the folksiness, segueing magically into the second theme with each echoed phrase dropping to a whisper like some illicit sweet nothing. The second-movement *Andantino* is a full-voiced canzona but poised like a set piece from the ballet. The *pizzicato* footwork which follows is spick and span but robust, too, and the finale has its sights firmly set on a roof-raising coda. The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra certainly earned their cheers in this live event.

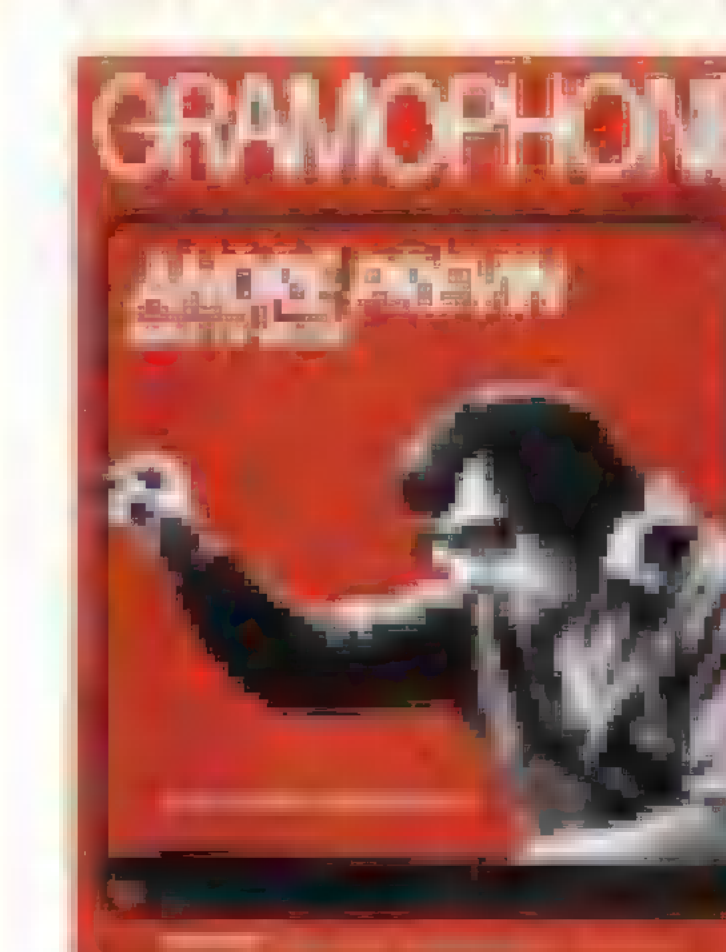
I've heard more ferocious whirlwinds down in the second circle of Hell that is *Francesca da Rimini* (Stokowski, Bernstein and Dudamel, to name three) – but again Nelsons's CBSO woodwinds voice the tormented souls with shrill insistency – a sound so at odds with the limpid musings (exquisite solo clarinet) at the still centre of the piece. It's so interesting to compare Bernstein (with the Israel Philharmonic) in the approach to the big trombone-led transfiguration of the love theme: Bernstein's palpitating rubato is in marked contrast to Nelsons's steady-as-she-goes progression. Both convey passion but it's the difference in

GRAMOPHONE Archive

June 1978: Tchaikovsky in Berlin

Our review of Herbert von Karajan's Berlin recording of Tchaikovsky's Fourth from 1978 – the year Andris Nelsons was born

Tchaikovsky



Symphony No 4, Op 36
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra /
Herbert von Karajan

DG 2530 883

Comparis on: VPO, Abbado
(11/76) 2530 651

Even among Karajan's many records of Tchaikovsky this new issue of the Fourth is outstanding. I thought when DG issued its superb record of this work with Claudio Abbado conducting the Vienna Philharmonic that we had come close to a definitive version which could remain a first recommendation for years to come. Now I am not so sure, and strongly suspect that the majority of Tchaikovskians will prefer Karajan's marginally more expressive style in the middle two movements.

The wonder is perhaps that the two versions from two such contrasted maestri should be as alike as they are, with strikingly similar tempi. The most clearly defined differences are less in the first movement – which usually separates the versions very sharply – than in those middle two movements. Where Abbado adopts a clean-cut *Andantino*, Karajan more clearly at the start observes the marking which Tchaikovsky added, in *modo di canzone* ('in the manner of a song'), relaxing expressively but without any hint of selfconsciousness or mannerism. When the strings take over the melody from the oboe, Karajan's tempo comes up very close to that of Abbado, but later in the central *piu mosso* with its big climax, it is Abbado who makes the sharper distinction at a markedly faster tempo. Similarly in the *pizzicato* third movement, it is Abbado who is more literal in his reading, Karajan who brings out the hairpin graduations more clearly and who in the drunken peasant theme of the Trio has a jauntier gait.

Needless to say the playing in both versions is superlatively good, and the differences in the outer movements are less the result of actual interpretative contrasts – though there are obviously many points of detail to note – than of the contrasts of recording quality. The Abbado performance has a fraction more bite, the Karajan rather more mystery with a radiantly beautiful string tone. I can only say that DG, having produced one superlative version of this symphony, have now issued another.

Edward Greenfield, June 1978

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gramophone.co.uk

style which will ultimately define whether this is your kind of performance or not.

Edward Seckerson

Francesca da Rimini – selected comparison:

Israel PO, Bernstein (2/80th) (DG) 439 983-2GGA

Vivaldi

Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione, Op 8

Avison Ensemble / Pavlo Beznosiuk *vn*

Linn ② ③ CKD365 (114' • DDD/DSD)

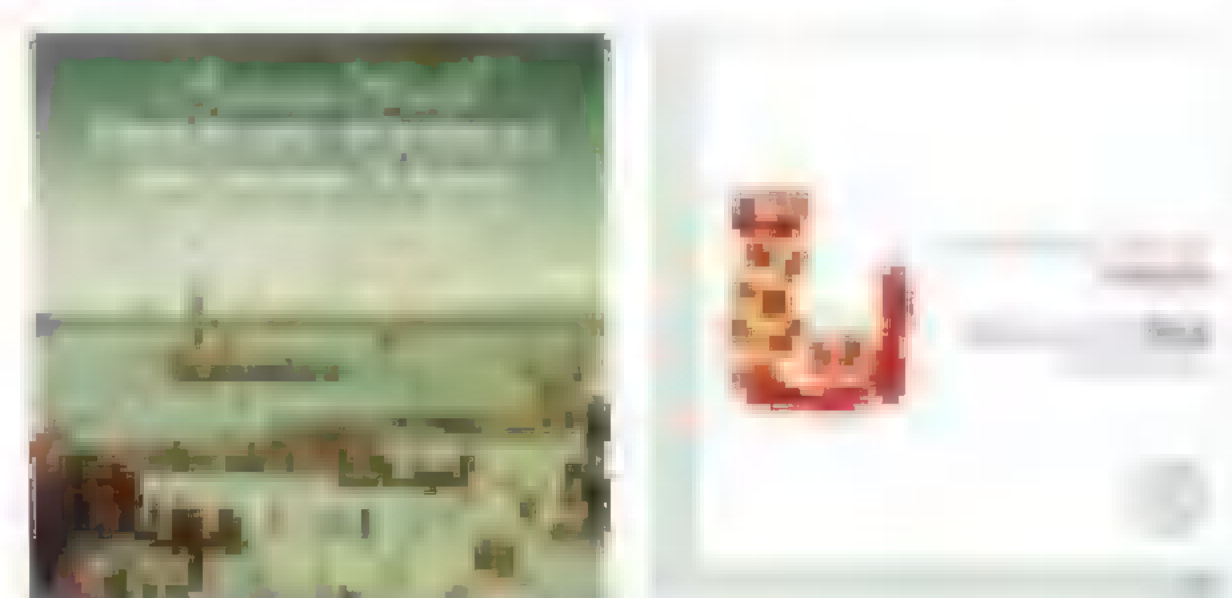
Vivaldi • Cage

Cage String Quartet in Four Parts (arr Agsteribbe)

Vivaldi The Four Seasons, Op 8 Nos 1-4

B'Rock / Rodolfo Richter *vn*

Etcetera ② ③ KTC1429 (114' • DDD)



Eight Seasons: two completely different approaches to period-instrument Vivaldi

As violinist and Avison Ensemble director Pavlo Beznosiuk writes in his booklet-note to the Avison's fine new complete recording of Vivaldi's *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione*, Op 8, 'We live in a world where the ubiquity of recorded music can blind us to its content and with...*Le quattro stagioni*...the situation is acute'. Beznosiuk's solution is to focus on the 'evocations of human states' and 'emotional, inner subtext' in Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. In other words, a more psychological, if not frankly phenomenological approach to interpretation. And it pays off big time.

I've always admired the suavity and subtle imaginative colouring of the Avison Ensemble's performances and their recording of Charles Avison's 12 Concerti grossi after Scarlatti (Divine Art, 4/09) is one I return to again and again. Here Vivaldi's grosser programmatic intentions are made the subject of speculation rather than plain realisation. Thus the dogs of 'Spring' question rather than just bark, while the following *Allegro* is incongruously stately. A fragile tension permeates both 'Summer' and 'Winter' (mixed with frustration in the latter); 'Autumn' moves from playful to hypnotic to (deliberately) primitively percussive. Beznosiuk's playing is a marvel both here and throughout the remaining concertos – especially No 11 in D major – distinctive in tone, phrase and ornament, and at one with an ensemble which likewise responds to this music with a genuine freshness and intelligence.

Those same qualities come time to mind while listening to violinist Rodolfo Richter and B'Rock's new recording of *The Four Seasons*, which in their case is coupled with an arrangement for Baroque orchestra of John Cage's *String Quartet in Four Parts*. The ensemble's harpsichordist and musical director Frank Agsteribbe states in his

booklet-note that 'the immediate cause' for the recording is Cage's direction that his quartet should be played 'without vibrato and with only minimum weight on the bow'. A perfect fit, it seems, for gut strings and Baroque bows, and a perfect opportunity in the case of the Vivaldi to 'make it new' by juxtaposing it with Cage's quartet.

And yes, it too pays off big time, with each movement of the Cage acting as a strange, oneiric pendant or footnote to each concerto in *The Four Seasons*. Certainly, Richter and B'Rock take a far more vigorous approach to Vivaldi than do the Avisons, with extremes of tempi and dynamics, as well as generous rhetorical pauses and profuse ornamentation the order of the day. But in the context of Cage's poised stillness, the effect is extraordinary. **William Yeoman**

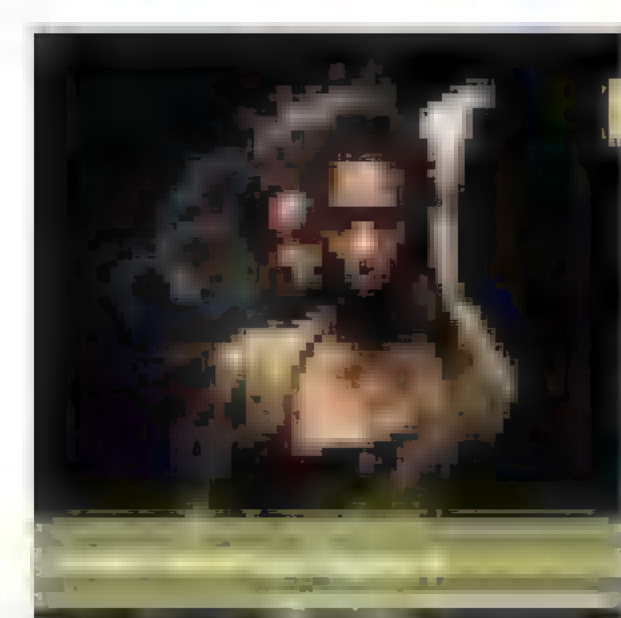
Vivaldi

'Concerti per fagotto II'

Bassoon Concertos – RV470; RV472; RV483; RV490; RV496; RV499; RV504

Sergio Azzolini *bn* **L'Aura Soave Cremona**

Naïve ② ③ OP30518 (77' • DDD)



Azzolini's bassoon back out for a second Vivaldi volume

There was a time when even my heart might have sunk at the idea of 'Vivaldi Bassoon Concertos, Vol 2', but that was before I heard Sergio Azzolini and L'Aura Soave Cremona in their Vol 1 (9/10). Now I could not feel more differently. In that first release Azzolini's lusty blowing, irrepressible playfulness and ardent lyricism brought seven of Vivaldi's 39 bassoon concertos surging into life and made of the solo instrument itself a character of real vitality and depth. As another of those distinctive Naïve covers popped out of the envelope, anticipation was in the air.

Nor, for the most part, was it disappointed. Azzolini is on excellent form again and seems to have lost none of the infectious eagerness with which he started out. Perhaps not every concerto here is of consistent quality but there are some wonderful moments: as in his cello concertos, Vivaldi often finds a melodic melancholy and textural richness here that surfaces less frequently elsewhere, while the first movement of RV483 bristles with brilliant operatic bluster, RV496 and RV472 are blessed with ravishing slow movements (the latter having the haunting mien of a lonely love-lament in a Venetian nightscape), and RV496 ends with an athletic finale. Azzolini catches all these moods and is everywhere tireless in avoidance of the routine – listen to the dramatic pause before the last ritornello in RV496, where

others might simply have ploughed on head-down.

Less successful is the recorded sound, which renders the strings a touch glassy and indistinct in comparison to the cleaner focus of the earlier disc. But it does not take Azzolini long to put that out of your mind. Has anyone ever grabbed hold of this music so wholeheartedly? **Lindsay Kemp**

'Dances to a Black Pipe'

Brahms Hungarian Dances, WoO1 – No 1; No 12;

No 13; No 21 (all arr G Fröst) Copland Clarinet

Concerto (including original second movement)

G Fröst Klezmer Dances Hillborg Peacock Tales

Högberg Dancing with Silent Purpose Lutoslawski

Dance Preludes Piazzolla Oblivion

Martin Fröst *cl* **Australian Chamber Orchestra /**

Richard Tognetti *vn*

BIS ② ③ BIS-SACD1863 (82' • DDD/DSD)



The Swedish clarinetist dances through epochs and lands

There may be works by Brahms, Copland and Piazzolla here but almost every piece is a novelty in Martin Fröst's dance-themed programme. Copland's Concerto, written for Benny Goodman, is well known enough but not the original version of its second movement which, especially in the coda, contained more difficult passages than in the familiar version. Fröst opens with the revised Concerto Goodman premiered in 1950 (and later recorded with the composer) and concludes the disc with the original second movement. The differences are not too significant and Fröst despatches both with equal élan and a match for his previous BIS recording.

Hillborg's *Peacock Tales*, given in its 2002 chamber version, exists in three different incarnations (Fröst recorded the full-orchestral version, 11/03). Including the shorter 'Millennium' version, *Peacock Tales* has proved a popular new repertoire item – almost half of the 52 performances of Hillborg's music listed on his website for 2011 are of one version or other – and here receives a blisteringly virtuoso performance from Fröst, expertly accompanied by the Australian Chamber Orchestra. It is a much stronger piece than Högberg's *Dancing with Silent Purpose* for clarinet, strings and tape, the third span of which Fröst wrote in part, though it is growing on me.

This partnership of soloist and orchestra is an inspired one, not least in the smaller-scale pieces, most particularly Lutoslawski's vibrant *Dance Preludes* (the 1955 version). Fröst's account is every inch as virtuoso as Stoltzman's, stiff opposition in a more mainstream programme. His brother's arrangements of four Brahms *Hungarian*

Dances are fun, as are Göran Fröst's own *Klezmer Dances*. Piazzolla's *Oblivion* rounds off this hugely engaging programme. There is a quirky and highly personal essay in lieu of booklet-note from Fröst himself.

Guy Rickards

Copland – selected comparisons:

Goodman, LSO, Copland (7/91⁸) (SONY) SK42227

Fröst, Malmö SO, Sbuli (A/98) (BIS) BIS-CD893

Lutoslawski – selected comparison:

Stoltzman, Warsaw PO, Leighton Smith

(A/02) (RCA) 09026 63836-2

'Kinshasa Symphony'

DVD

A film by **Claus Wischmann** and **Martin Baer**

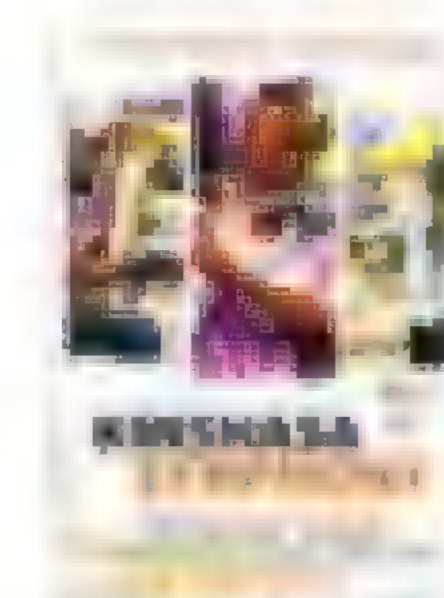
Kimbanguiste Symphony Orchestra /

Armand Diangienda

C Major © DVD 708308; © 709004

(95' + 10' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • PCM stereo,

DTS 5.1 & DTS-HD MA • 0 s)



Following the preparations for a Congolese Choral Symphony

The opening sequence shows a man perching precariously at the top of a flimsy pole connecting a tangle of live wires to a floodlight. He is Joseph Lutete, electrician, hairdresser – and a viola player in the Orchestre Symphonique Kimbanguiste. There are constant black-outs during rehearsals and the entrepreneurial Joseph is a key player in more than one sense. Over the course of this inspiring film we get to know other members of the orchestra: Albert, who fashions double basses out of local wood; his wife, Joséphine, one of the cello players, who starts work at 6am selling omelettes in the market place; and former airline pilot Armand Diangienda, the founder and conductor of this, the Congo's only orchestra.

Claus Wischmann's leisurely documentary follows the progress of the choir and orchestra as they prepare for a huge open air concert that will include the last movement of Beethoven's *Choral Symphony*. For any amateur forces it's a big ask but for the mainly self-taught musicians of Kinshasa, Africa's third largest city (the capital of the Congo has 10 million inhabitants whose average income is US\$300 per capita per annum), it seems like a step too far.

But the film is also about the inhabitants of Kinshasa. Martin Baer's photography, Peter Klum's skilful editing and Pascal Capitolin's soundscape capture the chaos, overcrowding, mud roads, ancient vehicles and pitiful living conditions all too vividly. Required viewing for all in the affluent West who take part in group musical activities at any level. In the future, if I hear another moan from anyone in my own choir I shall make them sit down and watch *Kinshasa Symphony*.

Jeremy Nicholas



Seasoned players: members of Belgian period-instrument ensemble B'Rock

'Phoenix'

Howells Oboe Sonata (arr B Wallfisch)

Patterson Phoenix Concerto, Op 102

Vaughan Williams Oboe Concerto

Emily Pailthorpe ob

English Chamber Orchestra / Benjamin Wallfisch

Champs Hill © CHRCDO25 (68' • DDD)



Concertos old and new from Juilliard-trained oboist

Emily Pailthorpe is a young prize-winning oboist, trained at the Juilliard School in New York, who plays with an exceptionally sweet and pure tone. Here she offers three British oboe concertos, the first of which, by Paul Patterson, was commissioned for her. Before writing it, Patterson asked Emily to improvise for him, and it was her playing then that led him to think of a work inspired by the phoenix, the firebird that rises from the ashes. Pailthorpe herself feels that her improvising is 'exotic and bird-like', mirroring that same idea: hence the title *Phoenix*, which is also the title of the disc.

The first movement starts with a cadenza for the soloist and then launches into a jaunty *Allegro* in an attractive tonal idiom. A brief pause introduces the second movement, marked *Tranquillo*, which allows the soloist to weave vaguely oriental ideas, as though in improvisation. The finale is a dashing movement full of syncopations and changes of rhythm, again most attractive. The

Vaughan Williams Concerto, also for oboe and strings, was originally written in 1944 for the great oboist Leon Goossens and has become central to the oboist's repertoire, beautifully written for the instrument. The first movement, entitled *Rondo pastorale*, takes us close to the world of RVW's *The Lark Ascending*, while including a sharply pointed middle section. The second movement is described as a *Minuet and Musette*, leading to a *scherzo*-like finale, with another pastoral section before the fast coda and sudden gentle close.

The Howells work is an arrangement for oboe, harp and strings of Howells's Oboe Sonata, written in 1942 but left in manuscript until discovered among the composer's papers at his death. Pailthorpe felt with some justice that it would work better with string rather than piano accompaniment, and that is why she got Benjamin Wallfisch, conductor of the English Chamber Orchestra on the disc, to make this arrangement.

Though the first of the four brief movements seems to stop and start rather too much, the rest is a delight, a warmly lyrical slow movement followed by an *Allegro scherzando* with prominent harp-writing and a final gentle epilogue, leading to a tranquil *pianissimo* close. As well as Pailthorpe's fine playing, it is good to have the ECO in splendid form under Benjamin Wallfisch, recorded with fine definition and clarity.

Edward Greenfield



Philip Clark on new sounds from Chris Brown:

'I marvel at Brown using his computer to creep between and inside the vibrating echoes of vibraphone and piano' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 55**



Nalen Anthoni reviews Mozart from Duo Amadè:

'To paraphrase Schumann, they don't recognise what the composer created out of his inner self' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 57**

Barber • Crumb • Reich

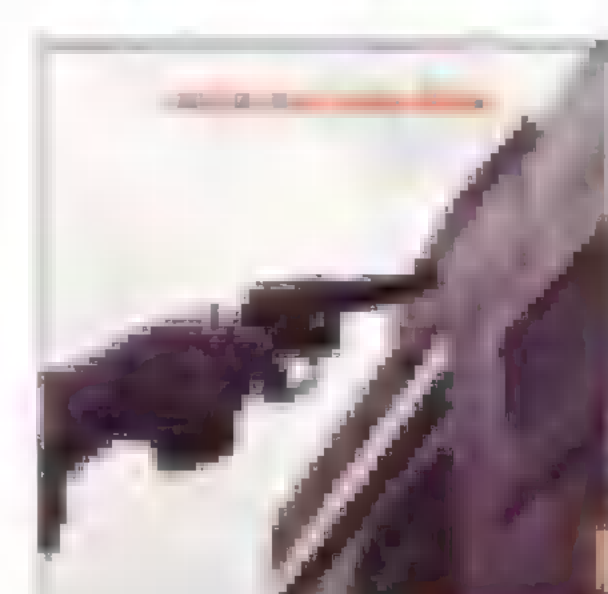
'American Music'

Barber String Quartet, Op 11

Crumb Black Angels **Reich** Different Trains

Diotima Quartet

Naïve ⑤ V5272 (67' • DDD)



French quartet in iconic chamber Americana

This is an eccentric collection of strange bedfellows. With plenty of recordings of all three composers available, wouldn't fans of any one of them surely prefer a single-composer CD? The oldest music is the Barber, which gets regular performances, but its reputation has been submerged by the string-orchestra version of its slow movement – the famous *Adagio*. After that, the quartet version feels anaemic, especially in the slightly harsh recorded sound here.

That doesn't matter in what is chronologically the next piece – Crumb's *Black Angels*, written in 1970 during the Vietnam War and establishing Crumb as a new voice to be reckoned with. Quite right too, with the work's fertile exploration of new sounds and symbolic use of quotation including Schubert and the *Dies irae*. Unfortunately the layout of the sections given in the score is not provided in the booklet – Vol 7 of the George Crumb Edition on Bridge handles matters far better, although the Diotima's performance is a strong one.

Steve Reich is also making a grim humanitarian gesture in *Different Trains*, where he portrays the trains he took as a child from coast to coast between his divorced parents and those transporting Jewish children in Europe to the gas chambers. There are masses of recorded train whistles in a typically relentless texture and the superimposed voices hark back to Reich's earliest tape-loop pieces such as *Come Out*. There's a fuller orchestral version of *Different Trains* which – as for Barber's hit – is more sumptuous. **Peter Dickinson**

Crumb – selected comparison:

Miró Qt (4/04) (BRID) BRIDGE9139

Reich – selected comparison:

Lyons Nat Orch, Robertson (4/05) (NAIV) MO782167

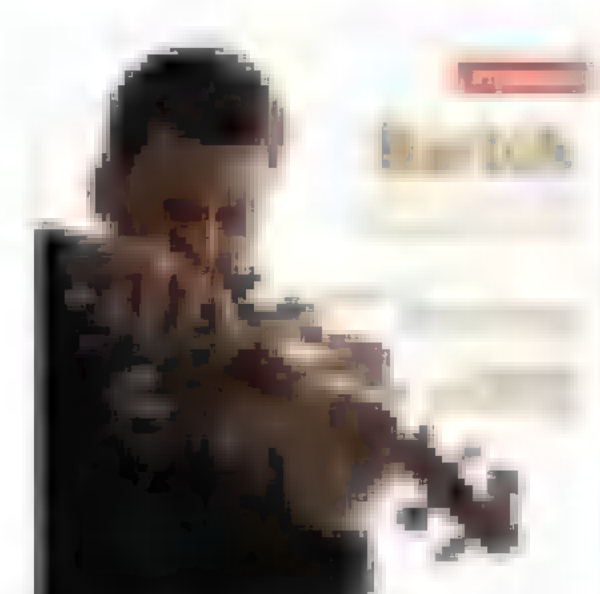
Bartók

Violin Sonatas – No 1, Sz75; No 2, Sz76.

Rhapsodies – No 1, Sz86 (with alternative ending for Part 2); No 2, Sz89. Andante

James Ehnes *vn* **Andrew Armstrong** *pf*

Chandos ⑤ CHAN10705 (81' • DDD)



Ehnes follows Bartók concertos with sonatas and rhapsodies

Rather than opt for the sonatas first with the Rhapsodies as makeweights, or favouring a purely chronological route, James Ehnes and Andrew Armstrong have provided a valuable study in contrasts, letting us in gently with the affable First Rhapsody, then delving among the deeper shadows of the two-tier Second Sonata, emerging from there to the darker, more exotic-sounding Second Rhapsody before hurling us headlong into the swirling storms and nightscapes of the First Sonata. The early, Brahmsian Andante and alternative (actually more familiar) ending for the First Rhapsody serve more or less as encores.

The performances are assertive but never excessively forceful, tonally sweet (useful in this often acerbic music) and, from Andrew Armstrong's standpoint, almost impressionist in their projection of nuance and tonal shading. Maybe the finale of the First Sonata doesn't quite match the reckless bravura of Martha Argerich (for Gidon Kremer) or Sviatoslav Richter (for David Oistrakh), but control is a laudable virtue and the result is that one attends as much to the notes as to the effect they're having. Interesting to have both endings for the First Rhapsody but the alternative finale to the Second would have been even more welcome, and of course there's the early Sonata of 1903 which, like the 1902 Andante that we're given, shows a budding Romantic before the seeds of dissonance had flown his way.

The only set to include all this material – all of Bartók's music for violin and piano in fact – is a very generous two-CD collection on Zephyr with Sherban Lupu and Ian Hobson. Lupu is at his most ravishing and gypsy-like in the unaccompanied opening of the First Sonata's slow movement (Ehnes's

purity is also attractive, though Lupu digs deeper), but elsewhere Hobson's piano too often hogs the limelight. André Gertler and Diane Andersen, in their authoritatively interpreted four-CD Supraphon collection, offer us all three sonatas, the (orchestrated) Rhapsodies, the concertos and other works.

So, summing up, Ehnes and Armstrong provide an exceedingly generous programme (80'30"), expertly engineered, well planned, beautifully executed. Theirs is certainly an excellent place to start but do try if you can to investigate the very different alternatives mentioned. **Rob Cowan**

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

S Lupu, Hobson (ZEPH) Z130-04-02

Vn Sons – selected comparison:

Gertler, Andersen (SUPR) SU3924-2

Vn Son No 1 – selected comparisons:

Kremer, Argerich (6/09) (EMI) 693399-2

Oistrakh, Richter (MELO) MELCD100 0744

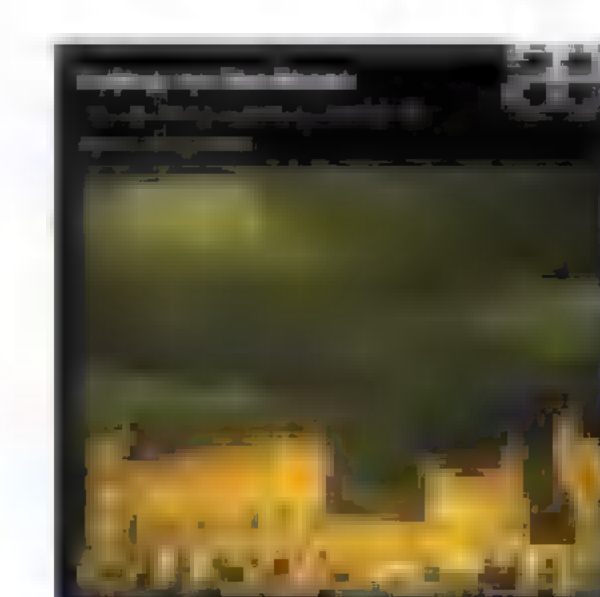
Beethoven



String Quartets – No 12, Op 127; No 14, Op 131

Brentano Quartet

Aeon ⑤ AECD1110 (78' • DDD)



Late quartets from Princeton's ensemble-in-residence

A coupling of Op 127, the most approachable of Beethoven's late quartets, with Op 131, the most strikingly radical, could not be more attractive, particularly in performances like these, which in every way are exceptional. The Brentano Quartet was founded in 1992 by four American players and it is not a backhanded compliment to say that they do not sound like an American quartet, with no hint of the sort of thrusting super-efficiency that marks some of the very finest American groups.

What is so satisfying about these performances recorded at Princeton University is the overall warmth of the playing, with speeds ideally chosen and never forced, with natural rubato and shading, and with wonderfully sustained *pianissimos*, as in the slow fugue which opens Op 131, leading to a perfectly judged climax. The second-movement *Allegro* is then light and clear

before the brief recitative-like movement which leads into the great set of variations on the *Andante* main theme, marking the very heart of this visionary work.

The high contrasts in that long movement are perfectly controlled, with the quirky comments in the penultimate variation deliciously pointed, with the right hint of humour. This is music, as has been said, that sounds as if it has only just emerged into human hearing, and that is what the Brentanos make you feel. The *Scherzo* of the following movement is then lightly pointed, with perfect clarity of detail and resonant *pizzicatos*. The brief *Adagio* which leads into the finale makes up for brevity in its intensity, before the dashing finale brings crisply pointed dotted rhythms and a finely judged close.

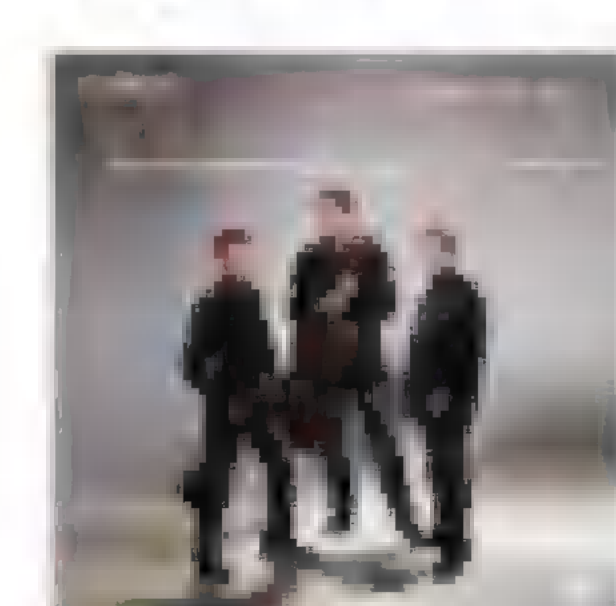
The comparable account of Op 127 also centres around the long set of slow variations of the second movement, soothing in its sweetness yet full of mystery. This again is ethereal music, before the cheekily jaunty *Scherzo* with its nonchalant throwaway close, leading to the finale with big contrasts naturally brought out. This is a disc that makes one want to hear the Brentanos in the other late Beethoven quartets. Anyone who fancies this generous coupling need not hesitate. **Edward Greenfield**

Beethoven

Three String Trios, Op 9

Trio Zimmermann

BIS ④ BIS-SACD1857 (74' • DDD/DSD)



Zimmermann, Tamestit and Poltéra in the Op 9 trios

Music on a small scale? Not as Beethoven conceived these Op 9 Trios. Robert Simpson found it a 'miracle' that the need for a second violin is never suggested and agreed with a view they are 'the *locus classicus* for astonishing weight and richness of sound in this medium'. The earliest sign of these attributes appears in the second subject to the opening movement of No 1, marked *pianissimo*. The violin plays the theme in two-note chords; the other instruments play single notes. Beethoven imposes a soft radiance to the four-part fabric of eight bars, yet the sonority isn't any thicker. This is also an early sign of Trio Zimmermann's mastery of the genre; whatever the part-writing, their internal equipoise offers no hint of a fourth participant.

There is no hint of caution either. These musicians are in command of the meticulously written extremes in expression, *sforzandos* not indiscriminately stabbed at but gauged according to the contexts in which they appear. Tempi are gauged to a nicety too,

as for example the slow movement of No 2, *Andante quasi allegretto*, the mood ideally balanced to convey the shadows of D minor within a 'swing' implied by the time signature of 6/8. All third movements are marked to be played fast but the tersely compact *Scherzo* of No 3 – *Allegro molto e vivace* – offers a particular instance of Trio Zimmermann's mettlesome musicianship. In sum, they do Beethoven proud throughout this exceptionally fine disc, enhanced by BIS's clean SACD sound. **Nalen Anthoni**

Nos 1 & 3 – selected comparison:

Kogan, Barshai, Rostropovich (8/11) (SUPR) SU4052-2

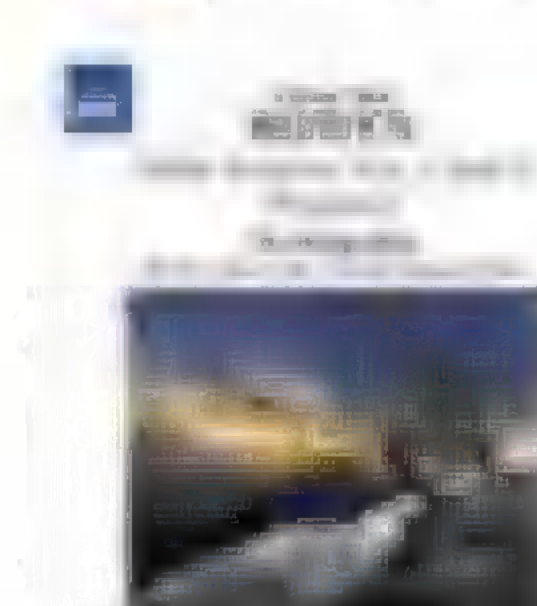
Bowen

Viola Sonatas – No 1, Op 18; No 2, Op 22.

Phantasy, Op 54

Bridge Duo (Matthew Jones vs Michael Hampton pf)

Naxos ④ 8 572580 (71' • DDD)



Further light on Bowen's viola with the two 1905 sonatas

Bowen's two highly contrasting viola sonatas were inspired by the pioneering virtuoso Lionel Tertis. Both were composed in 1905 and first performed by Tertis and Bowen (who was himself a fine pianist) at the Aeolian Hall, London, in May 1905 and February 1906 respectively. Considered to be at the cutting edge of technical difficulty for their time – Tertis insisted that Bowen should not write any less demanding for the viola than for the violin – this may have been a reason why the works were largely neglected until recent times. Now, however, this recording joins those of James Boyd with Bengt Forsberg and Lawrence Power with Simon Crawford-Phillips, which serves to underline how seriously Bowen's works for viola are now taken by the instrument's best virtuosos.

Moreover, both works provide a refreshing and varied sequel to the Brahms viola sonatas with which they are in many ways unjustly compared. Bowen's effulgent and often suave harmonic language is at once more opulent and extrovert, his aesthetic outlook rather less cerebrally classical than his German predecessor. Matthew Jones and Michael Hampton's enthusiastic and sympathetic performances bring out this aspect of Bowen's style in spades, especially in the slower central movements, and Jones's generous tone is admirably well suited to this brazenly Romantic repertoire, especially in the lyrical parts of the later and more mature *Phantasy* of 1918, above all in the wonderful *Poco adagio*, where the sense of control is particularly persuasive and affecting. **Jeremy Dibble**

Va Sons – selected comparisons:

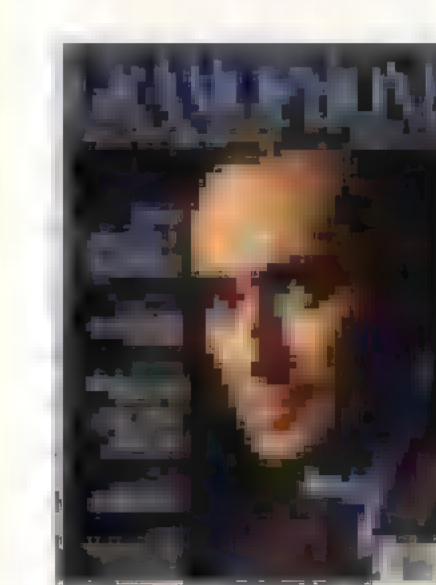
Power, Crawford-Phillips (9/08) (HYPER) CDA67651/2

Boyd, Forsberg (4/11) (DUTT) LXBOX2011

GRAMOPHONE *Archive*

Bartók's Violin Sonata No 1

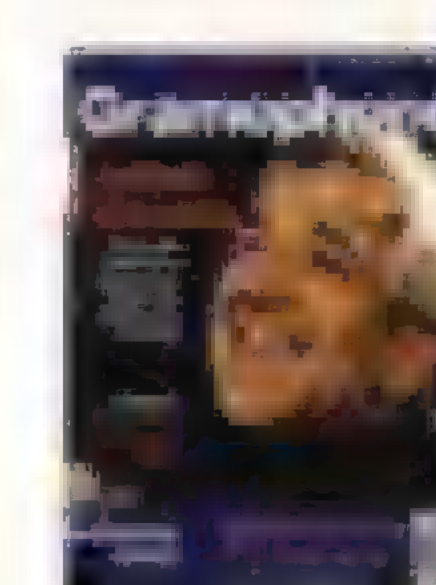
Putting Bartók player of-the-moment James Ehnes in context with a look at the archives



JANUARY 1991

Gidon Kremer vn Martha Argerich pf
DG ④ 427 351-2GH

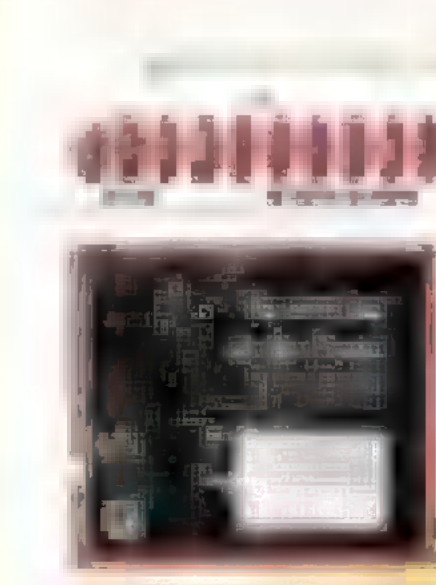
Bartók underwent a period of artistic self-examination immediately after the First World War. The Violin Sonata No 1 is the first result and has all the hallmarks of a style in transition. The first movement, probably the most elusive of the three, emerges as a hyper-romantic drama, not inappropriately given the extensive influence of Szymanowski on Bartók at the time. The playing has tremendous eloquence and range of expression, and there is not a dead note anywhere in the movement. The *Adagio* is no less enthralling and the rhythmic elasticity of the finale is just what the music needs. Kremer's earlier Hungaroton/Conifer recording, dating from 1975, was a superlative account, and it remains a good recommendation; but the finely recorded new DG is even more dazzling. *David Fanning*



OCTOBER 1993

David Oistrakh vn Frida Bauer pf
Praga ④ PR250 038

Bartók knew well how to pit dissonance against harmony so as to make his musical argument seem permanently provocative. Current competition notwithstanding, these particular performances demand special pleading. Firstly, they are hugely involving, with Oistrakh and Bauer breaking the natural bounds of their native propriety for fire-and-brimstone excitement. Bauer, though, demonstrates great control, and Oistrakh's tonal range is relatively urbane – although by this stage in his career, Oistrakh's tone had developed a hoarse, rasping edge that at times sounds positively Heifetzian. He can be heard in alternative readings, but the present release has a spur-of-the-moment spontaneity that will doubtless seduce all lovers of live music-making. *Robert Cowan*



JULY 1959

Yehudi Menuhin vn Hephzibah Menuhin pf
HMV ④ ALP1705 (12in)

The First Sonata for Violin and Piano was given its first performance, with the composer at the piano, in London in March 1922. Today it presents no difficulty for the listener. Menuhin and his sister are perfectly matched in this work and the balance, with an often very percussive piano part, is very good. As Halsey Stevens points out in his book on the composer, 'the piano part is overshadowed by the violin, which has the leading role in all but a very few measures. The province of the piano is to underline, to intensify with penetrating comment, to elucidate; and this is what Hephzibah Menuhin has so well understood. I hope brother and sister record the Second Sonata. *Alec Robertson*

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CHANDOS

OPERA IN
ENGLISH

— Debussy —

PELLÉAS AND MÉLISANDE



This is a live BBC broadcast of Debussy's groundbreaking opera, performed by the ENO Orchestra and Chorus under Mark Elder, with Neil Howlett, Eilene Hannan, and Robert Dean playing out the tragic love triangle.

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C Brown

'Iconicities'

Stupa^a. Gangsa^b. Iceberg^c

Chris Brown ^apf/elec ^bWilliam Winant

Percussion Group / William Winant ^{ac}perc

New World © 80723-2 (52' • DDD)

^cFrom Artifact ART1001



Percussion and electronics
from Californian thinker

'Where *Stupa* introduces polytemporality in the metaphysical and chronological sense, with all their playful capacity for harmony, *Gangsa* addresses the listener's time consciousness itself by opening up the compositional process to the phenomenological experience of sound and tempo.' Chris Brown – what sort of name is that for a composer? – is professor of music at Mills College in Oakland, California, and thinks nothing of issuing such statements as a guide to how these three pieces for percussion and live electronics might operate.

Are you still there? I hope so because, when it comes to that troubled relationship between 'academic' music and the hope-over-experience of Joe Public for music that satisfies the ache for old-school melody – for the sort of composer who doesn't need to be cushioned by academia to write music no one wants to hear – Chris Brown is a telling case study.

The name 'Chris Brown' might not resonate with the bold double-barrelled conviction of a Mark-Anthony Turnage, nor have a cheeky, transcendent 'grave' accent like Thomas Adès. He can't even claim Karl Jenkins's endearing good looks; indeed you may be thinking he has no profile at all which, as it happens, is why Chris Brown's music is so inspiring and lithe of concept. He's not a 'career' composer. Some composers use academia as an excuse to coast; Chris Brown has clearly had time to think about sound.

As I listen to *Stupa*, his 2007 piece for vibraphone, piano and computer, and marvel at Brown using his computer set-up to creep between and inside the vibrating echoes of vibraphone and piano hits, snatching at sounds to sample and drizzle back over their source, his deep listening and flair for sonic texture rings true. *Gangsa* (2010), for percussion ensemble and live computer processing, binges on the ritual of overlaying deceptively transparent rhythmic and melodic cycles with internally incompatible mathematical permutations that snap the regularity with metallic, brutal force.

Iceberg, from 1985, is more pitch-based, equally fascinating and rigorous. And I urge you to go buy – but not too many of you, or Chris Brown may make a name for himself.

Philip Clark

Delius • Ireland

'Evening Songs'

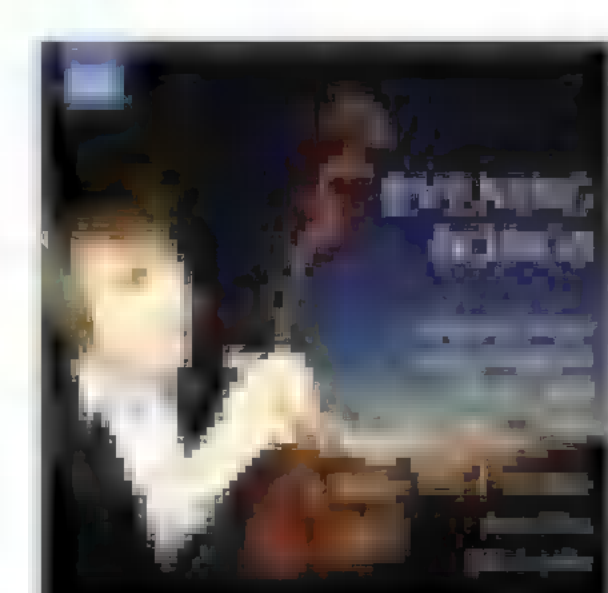
Delius Five Songs from the Norwegian – Sunset; Slumber Song. Birds in the High Hall Garden.

Three Shelley Songs – Love's Philosophy. Over the mountains high. Hassan – Serenade. Seven Danish Songs – Through long, long years; In the Seraglio Garden. Little Birdie. With your blue eyes Ireland Spring Sorrow. Evening Song^a. Sea Fever. The Holy Boy. Baby. The Three Ravens. Hope. Ladslove. Summer Schemes. Her Song. In Summer Woods^a

Julian Lloyd Webber, ^aJiaxin Cheng vcs

John Lenehan pf

Naxos © 8 572902 (63' • DDD)



Lloyd Webber and wife in
English 'songs without words'

In this interesting experiment of 'songs without words' by Delius and Ireland, Julian Lloyd Webber brings an especially sensitive 'voice' to the Barjansky-Stradivarius cello on which Alexandre Barjansky gave the premiere of Delius's Cello Concerto in Vienna in January 1921, not simply by creating that traditional 'singing' tone we expect from the instrument but also in the subtle changes of register and tone he lends to his own arrangements (all bar three), with the legerdemain of John Lenehan's delicate accompaniments. Hearing the songs of both composers without the texts, and played with such attention to contour and gradation, reminds us just how masterly and diverse both composers were in their art of the solo song, and indeed how far each composer developed his own individual concept of the genre.

In the case of Delius, the early, more Grieg-inspired 'Sunset', 'Slumber Song' and 'Birds in the High Hall Garden' (a first recording), and the pianistically athletic 'Love's Philosophy', contrast markedly with the languorous 'In the Seraglio Garden' and yearning 'Through long, long years' from the *Seven Danish Songs* of 1896-97, with their sense of extended, symphonic melody and pointillistic harmonies. Among the choice of Ireland's songs there are the old favourites 'Sea Fever' and 'The Holy Boy' (in Ireland's own arrangement), but they are played here with an insight into that nostalgic melancholy that only Ireland knew how to articulate. The sweep of 'Ladslove' and the introspection of 'Her Song' are also deeply affecting in this idiom, as are the two duets with Jiaxin Cheng of Ireland's two part-songs, 'Evening Song' and 'In Summer Woods'. As the title of the disc suggests, this is an ideal collection to while away the summer evenings.

Jeremy Dibble

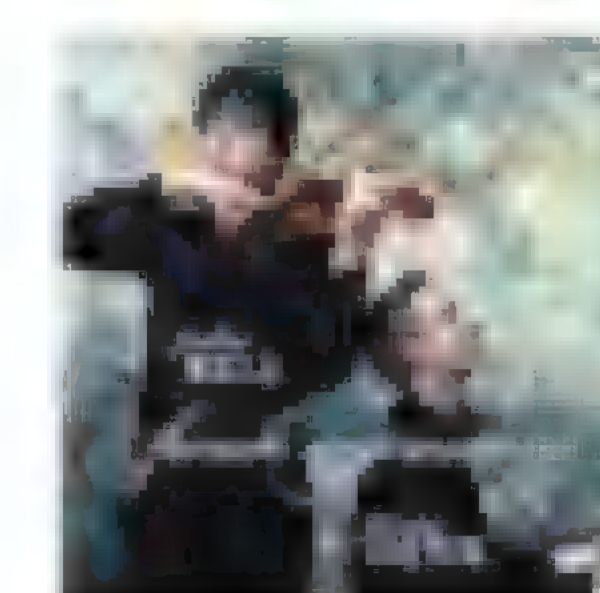
Franck • Ravel • Saint-Saëns

Franck Violin Sonata Ravel Violin Sonata

Saint-Saëns Violin Sonata No 1, Op 75

Joshua Bell vn Jeremy Denk vn

Sony Classical © 88697 89182-2 (67' • DDD)



French sonatas from Phoenix's
musical instrument museum

Joshua Bell and Jeremy Denk, a notably well-matched team, give idiomatic performances of these three sonatas (Denk also provides outstanding booklet-notes). They're especially adept in maintaining the flow of the musical narrative and, with it, the music's emotional flux.

I find the Saint-Saëns a slightly disappointing work: despite the fascinating metrical irregularity of its first movement and *scherzo*, and a brilliant finale, hints of superficiality pervade many passages. The best movement is surely the sensuous *Adagio*; Bell and Denk capture its tender mood perfectly, as well as making a virtuoso *tour de force* of the finale.

Their performance of the Ravel offers an interesting contrast with Alina Ibragimova and Cédric Tiberghien's recent recording. Where they opt for the most vivid, even grotesque contrasts, Denk and Bell stress continuity. In the central 'Blues' movement they achieve a subtle balance between 1920s jazz and Ravel's French style; Tiberghien and Ibragimova present instead a distorted, dreamlike vision. Bell is especially impressive in the *moto perpetuo* finale – not only thrillingly precise but full of colour and variety, too.

In the Franck, with its wide stretches for the pianist, Jeremy Denk is particularly successful in avoiding spread chords. Franck, however, was writing in an era when chords were habitually spread, and I think he is denying himself an important expressive resource. Otherwise, he and Bell give an enthralling account, taking note of all Franck's instructions as to character, dynamics and variation of tempo, though without adding any of the extraneous histrionic inflections we hear on the recording by Dora Schwarzberg and Martha Argerich.

Duncan Druce

Ravel – selected comparison:

Ibragimova, Tiberghien (A/11) (HYPER) CDA67820

Franck – selected comparison:

Schwarzberg, Argerich (10/06) (AVAN) AVANTI10232

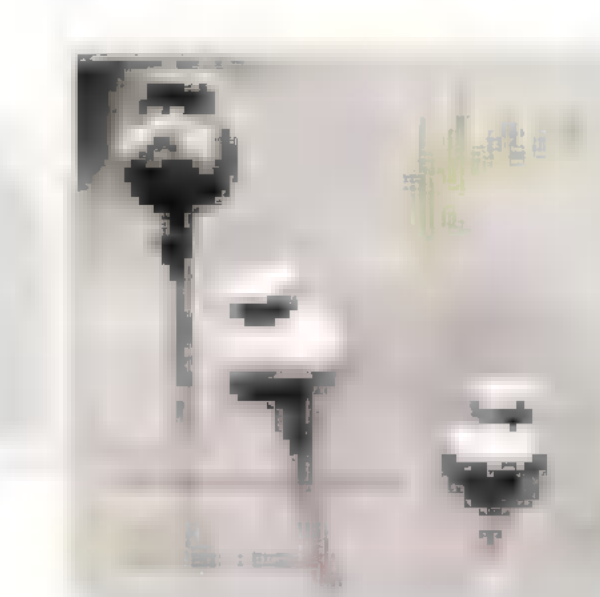
Mozart • Skempton

Mozart Divertimento, K563

Skempton Winter Sunrise

Florin Ensemble

Florin Music © FLORCD1 (71' • DDD)



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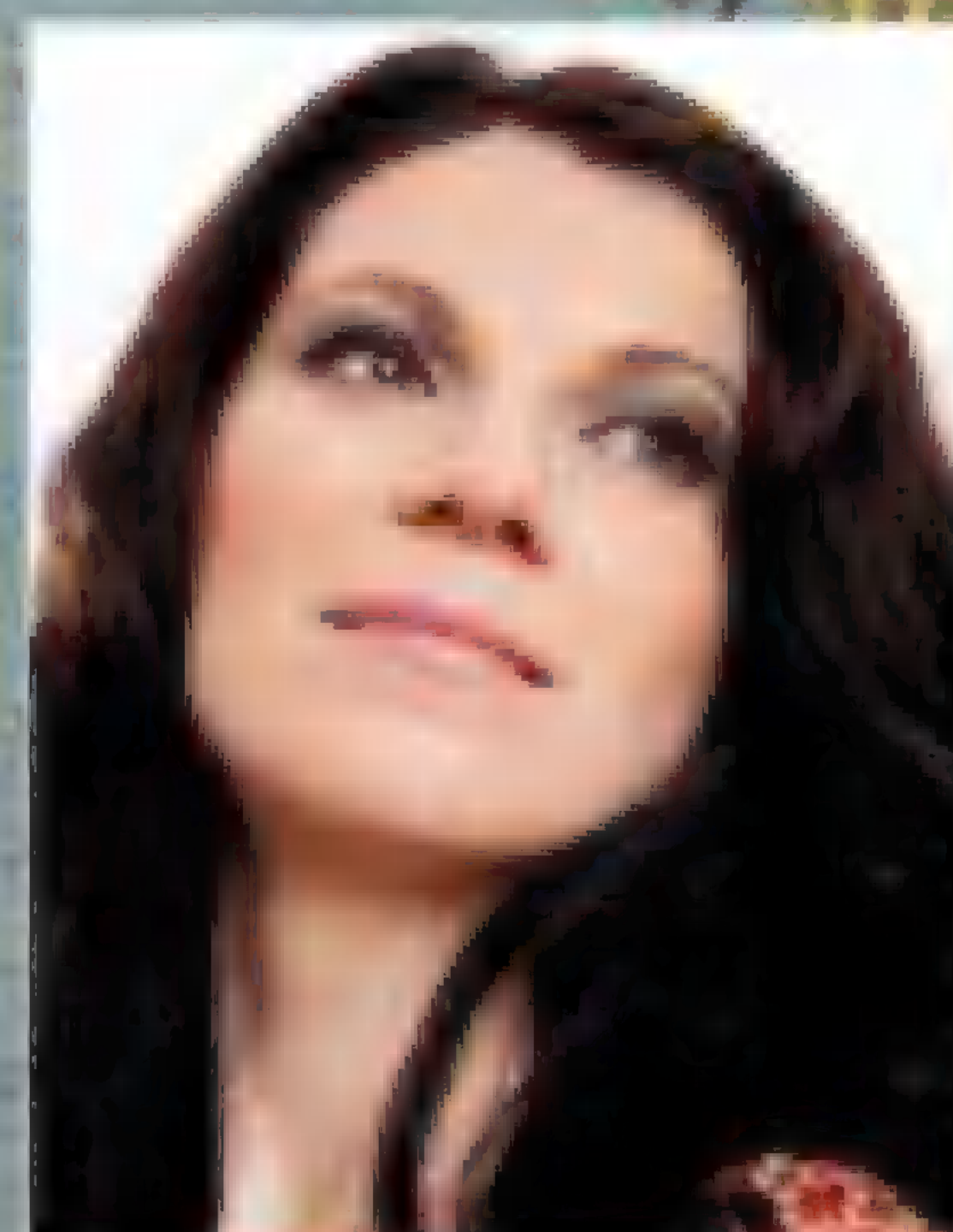


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Elisabeth Kuiman



Bo Skovhus



Sebastian Weigle

one of Mozart's late, great masterpieces, a massive work in six movements on a symphonic scale. Curiously, there is no record of why or how Mozart wrote it. But we can only be glad that such a fine, intense performance as this brings out its mastery.

The longest and deepest of its six movements is the second-movement *Adagio*, introduced after the powerfully symphonic opening *Allegro*, with a most adventurous central development section. In this performance the hushed intensity of the playing of the *Adagio*, beautifully sustained at its measured pace, bears witness to the mastery of the three players. The third-movement Minuet and Trio is then a *scherzo* in all but name, leading to the theme-and-variations *Andante*, full of striking invention in the interplay of parts, ending traditionally in a minor-key variation and a final fast one, nicely pointed here. The second Minuet is then like a relaxed Ländler, leading into a finale in a swinging 6/8 rhythm.

As a fill-up for that 45-minute work, the Florin Trio play a piece specially written for them by Howard Skempton. *Winter Sunrise* was inspired by a pastoral poem by the generally neglected poet Mary Webb, much admired in the 1930s by the then prime minister, Stanley Baldwin. Skempton, who left behind his early avant-garde style many years ago along with the Scratch Orchestra, here writes in slow alternating chords, at first hushed, building up to a climax illustrating the sunrise. It may not be a work to match the Mozart but it is a welcome makeweight, again beautifully played. **Edward Greenfield**

Mozart

'Duo Sonatas, Vol 5'

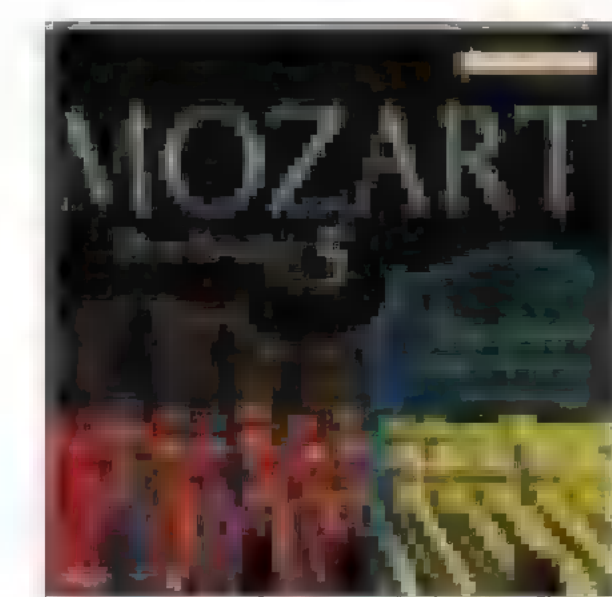
Violin Sonatas - No 28, K380;

No 32, K454; No 36, K547

Duo Amadè (Catherine Mackintosh *vn*

Geoffrey Govier *fp*)

Chandos Chaconne © CHAN0785 (58' • DDD)



More Mozart sonatas from former OAE leader

No disarming benevolence here. It is disquieting business as usual for Duo Amadè. They are closely recorded, probably accentuating the acerbic edge to their playing. A lower volume level ameliorates – but does not eliminate – the condition. Both Geoffrey Govier and Catherine Mackintosh are stern of approach and often very narrow in expressive range. These sonatas are for piano and violin, yet Mackintosh can be inaptly dominant, as she is nine bars into the development of K380's first movement, where the triplet figures from 3'45" to 4'06" form an accompaniment; and similarly in the three opening bars of her first entry, marked *piano*, in the slow movement *Andante con moto*.

Unless the moderator is used, as in the F minor variation in the third movement of K547, Govier's notes are like stark cut-outs. They add to the largely monochrome severity of the duo's playing with its uncomfortable suggestion of obedience to a prescriptive treatise. Didacticism takes precedence over recreative imagination. There is very little indication that these musicians feel the different impulses that pervade each work, and meant to be expressed through a personal responsibility for the music. To paraphrase Schumann, they don't recognise what the composer created out of his inner self.

Nor would you recognise that Govier uses a similar instrument (copy of an Anton Walter c1795) to Kristian Bezuidenhout and Gary Cooper who, with Petra Müllejans and Rachel Podger respectively, unveil in their individual ways a many-faceted richness of content that eludes Duo Amadè. **Nalen Anthoni**

K454 – selected comparison:

Bezuidenhout, Müllejans (6/09) (HARM) HMU90 7494

K547 – selected comparison:

Cooper, Podger (2/05) (CHNN) CCSSA21804

Shostakovich • Stravinsky

Shostakovich Violin Sonata, Op 134

Stravinsky Divertimento

Judith Ingolfsson *vn* **Vladimir Stoupel** *pf*

Audite © AUDITE92 576 (55' • DDD/DSD)



Stuttgart professor explores parallels from two Russians

Though the booklet-note writer declares that between Stravinsky and Shostakovich there is a 'disparity in the conception of musical art which could not be greater', they actually share qualities that make this a fascinating record. One is the love of dance rhythms. It is obvious in the use of some of Tchaikovsky's songs and piano pieces for Stravinsky's Divertimento based on his ballet *The Fairy's Kiss*, and it is again strongly present in the klezmer-like *Allegretto* of Shostakovich's powerful Sonata; all seized upon with great brio here, as they need to be. There is also the invocation of earlier composers, with Stravinsky's exuberant Tchaikovsky transformations and with Shostakovich's profound homages to Bach.

Ingolfsson and Stoupel draw the Bach inspiration out in the deceptively straightforward opening *Andante* and in the long *Largo* finale to Shostakovich's Sonata, a marvellous, haunting piece of extended musical thought which is handled with superb control. There is also a less readily identifiable but very Russian sense of energy in the more vigorous dance music, which can seem to be on the verge of breaking out of control, especially in the Shostakovich's central movement. Both composers also




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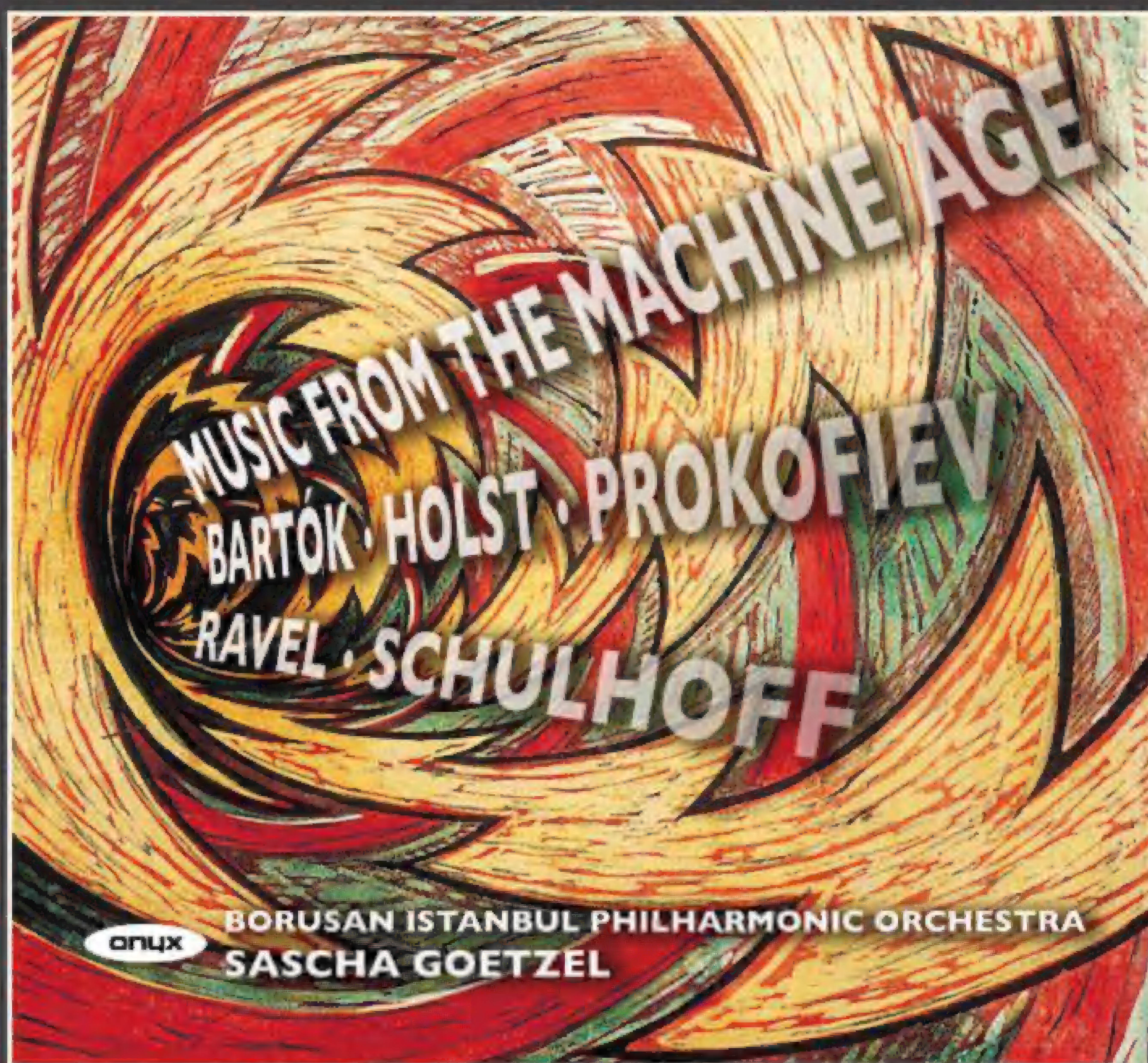
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respond to the inspiration of bell sounds, something again very Russian and vividly invoked here.

These are both strong, perceptive performances, recorded closely and lucidly, in which the complicated ambiguities in the music of both composers take hold powerfully below the sometimes jaunty surface.

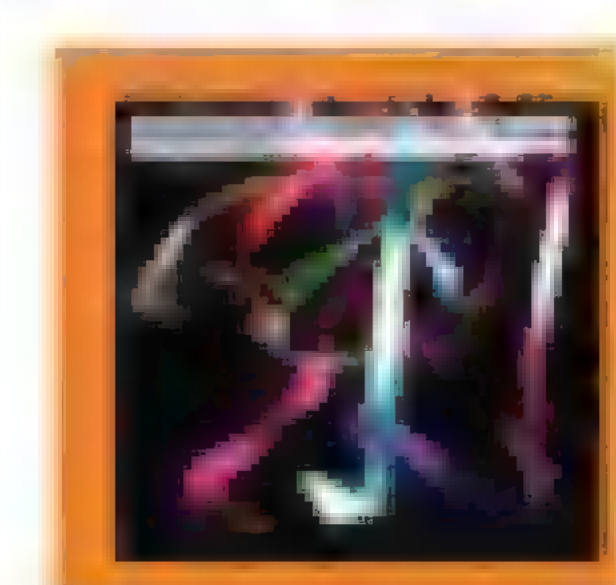
John Warrack

Telemann

Burlesque de Quichotte, TWV55:G10. Concertos - TWV52:a2; TWV52:e1. Intrada, 'Gulliver Suite', TWV40:108. Der Getreue Music-Meister - Introduzione a tre, TWV42:C1. Tafelmusik - Conclusion in E minor, TWV50:10

Les Esprits Animaux

Ambronay © AMY302 (69' • DDD)



Debut recording for Hague-hatched early music group

Les Esprits Animaux are a new chamber group formed in 2009 among postgraduate students at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, and there is freshness aplenty in this, their first CD release. The all-Telemann programme offers three descriptive suites interspersed with works which, though without subtitle, brim nonetheless with personality.

The highlight is the *Burlesque de Quichotte*, one of the most brilliantly imaginative of all Telemann's suites, in which Les Esprits fall upon every illustrative touch and joke with all the evident enjoyment of talented youth. I have not heard the piece played one-to-a-part before but cannot say that it loses anything in vividness or vigour. Indeed, led by the firmly eloquent violin of Javier Lupiáñez, the single strings seem rather to find extra vibrancy of line, dynamic contrast and bracing incisiveness. The spirit of Cervantes is present too: Quixote's assault in the windmills is blindly furious, his sighs for Dulcinea mopy and hopeless, his night-time dreams endearingly barmy. The untitled pieces include the popular Concerto for recorder and flute, just as characterfully entertaining especially in a rousingly stomping account of the 'gypsy' finale. There is more fun in the *Gulliver Suite* for two violins without bass but at no cost in musical sense – the Brobdingnagians' gigue is suitably ponderous but it is still securely a gigue.

There are some tuning lapses here and there – and the Concerto for two flutes and the *Introduzione* depicting a clutch of formidable Classical heroines cannot quite sustain the energy levels of the other pieces – but these are early days yet. For their wit, verve and flair, and for those first two pieces especially, Les Esprits Animaux look like a group to watch. Lindsay Kemp

Ustvolskaya

Composition No 2, 'Dies irae'^a.

Piano Sonata No 6^b. Grand Duet^c

^aRohan de Saram *vc* ^{bc}Marino Formenti, ^aFabrizio Ottaviuccu *pfs* ^aLaura Mancini *wooden block* ^aLudus Gravis Double Bass Ensemble / Stefano Scodanibbio Wergo © WER6739-2 (52' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Rassegna di Nuova Musica, Macerata, Italy, April 2010



Italian festival profiles
'the lady with the hammer'

Only Galina Ustvolskaya could have scored a composition for eight double basses, wooden block and piano; only Galina Ustvolskaya could have written a piano sonata that sounds like it's scored for eight double basses, wooden block and piano. But why a wooden block at all?

If the supposition that Ustvolskaya was constructing a form-meets-content visual metaphor for death means anything – which in a piece called *Dies irae* it probably should – the ritual of witnessing a percussionist summon up the Dark Side by hammering at the gates of heaven or hell on a wooden tomb-like structure stirs up gut emotions that, whoever your God, or if you have none at all, most of us keep suppressed. Ustvolskaya confronted us with mortality and did so through sound, which means this performance led by bass guru Stefano Scodanibbio ends up perched awkwardly between compromise and disappointment.

For evidence of how *Dies irae* could sound I refer you to Johannes Kalitzke on Neos's set documenting the 2009 Salzburg Biennale; with its stark sound environment and brutalist instrumental attack, now there's a performance fully versed in the chill of death. And I'm not saying this music is easy to record. The problems are obvious; but Wergo's top-heavy, treble-heavy balance leaves the piano sounding pinched and synthetic, and squashes anything lower than, say, the octave below middle C into a squeezed middle-ground. Nor am I swayed that percussionist Laura Mancini's hammer strokes are sufficiently God-fearing.

Elsewhere things pick up. Marino Formenti's route map around the Sixth Sonata's clusters reveals a fret of resonating overtones above the shell-shocked surface. When Rohan de Saram joins him for Ustvolskaya's Grand Duet, with its opening line clearly riffing off Shostakovich, it's the only thing thus far that sounds remotely like music as we know it; but as both men play with a physical commitment that transforms their instruments into tuned wooden resonating chambers, Ustvolskaya is kept unsullied and dangerous.

Philip Clark

'Modern American Bass'

J Beyer Movement Cage 59½" for a

String Player B Childs Sonata for Bass Alone

Druckman Valentine Iadone Double Bass Sonata

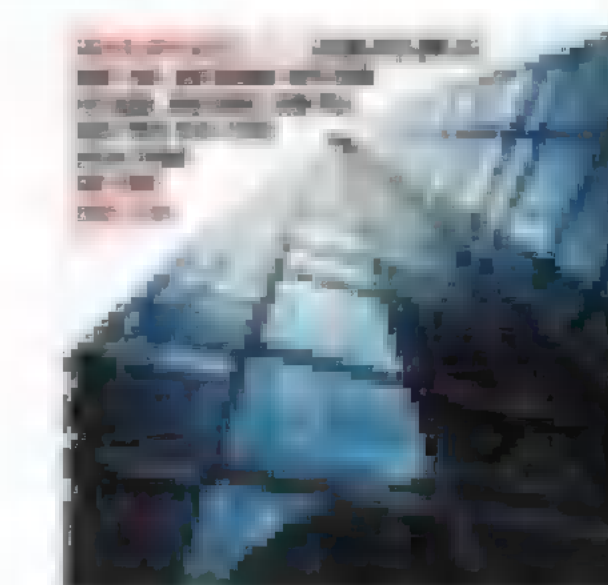
Luening Suite Moross Sonatina Perle Monody

Q Porter Lyric Piece H Stevens Arioso and Etude II

Sydeman For Double Bass Alone Tenney Beast

Robert Black *db* John McDonald *pf*

New World © 80722-2 (85' • DDD)



Bang on a Can bassist surveys
his instrument's US wares

When I started scribing for a now defunct double bass magazine many years ago, frankly I needed the cash; but as bassist after bassist confided about their close emotional relationship with their instrument I began to empathise and eventually fell head over heels with the instrument – with its bass-specific tone colour and mighty five-octave range; with the idea that contained within the bass is a blueprint for all other string instruments.

And it's no coincidence that Bang on a Can bassist Robert Black's recital disc works best when resonating in sympathy with the instrument's tonal grain and registral colours. Black has technical facility like other people have mice but there isn't much even he can do to sex up the generic neoclassicism of Joseph Iadone's Sonata (1950) or Halsey Stevens's *Arioso and Etude* (1953); Otto Luening's Suite (1958), with its kooky ping-ponging tonalities in the first movement, fares slightly better (a pity about the faux-Copland finale though); other composers who draw on the bass's jazz heritage, Jerome Moross in particular, at least jolt the instrument out of default 'lyrical' contours.

The truth: write for the bass like an obese cello and you run into trouble. The bass defined classically has only a supporting role; come the modern age though, music finally catches up. Cage's minute-long 59½" (1953) is fleeting but Black's leapfrogging, widely displaced pitch intervals and incorporating the wooden frame drags the instrument's full topography into focus at last.

James Tenney's *Beast* (1971) and Jacob Druckman's *Valentine* (1969) are the masterworks of the modern repertoire that changed perspectives on bass lore. Tenney makes the bass roar like a beast by detuning the E string a semitone lower; the bassist's job is to harvest the resulting frequency overtones, and here Black and instrument are as one. *Valentine* is a valentine to that intense physical bond bassists share with their instruments. Black sings at his bass, fondles it with a timpani stick, caricatures its melodic utterances with his voice. It sounds like spontaneous pillow talk but every detail is carefully notated to showcase the instrument's b(l)ooming marvels. Philip Clark

Instrumental



Bryce Morrison surveys new releases from Cyprien Katsaris:

'He may well be the most dazzling and innovative of all living virtuosos'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 65



Jeremy Nicholas reviews a new 'find' from Nelson Freire:

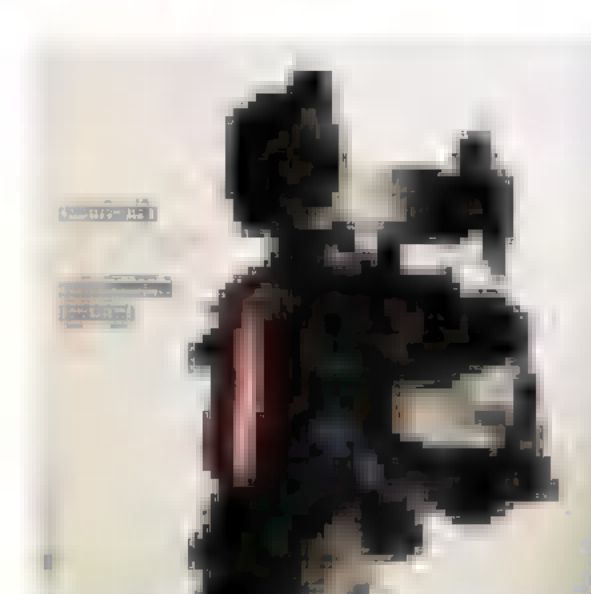
'The piano has the sonority of a half-grand, it has worn felt on the pedal action and the sound distorts' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 63

JS Bach • Pisendel

JS Bach Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, BWV1001-06. Pisendel Solo Violin Sonata

Amandine Beyer *vn*

Zig-Zag Territoires (M) (2) ZTT110902 (151' • DDD)



Solo sonatas and partitas from the founder of Gli Incogniti

Having marvelled at Maya Homburger's final instalment of Bach's Solo Sonatas and Partitas so recently (2/12), I find myself ever more in awe of the composer himself, for this music, in particular, continues to draw inspired performances from each successive generation of violinists. The French violinist Amandine Beyer, playing on a silky-toned copy of a Baroque violin by Pierre Jaquier, has recorded the entire set of three Sonatas and three Partitas, and an encore – a solo sonata by JG Pisendel, Bach's contemporary, a pupil of Vivaldi and renowned German violinist.

These are fresh, spirited, finely judged performances. The tempi of the fast movements never seem too quick, though they often prove faster than those of other period players, and the slow movements are superbly paced. Interestingly, too, whereas many violinists take you with them on their personal odyssey, Beyer never plays on the listener's emotions but instead maintains a sliver of detachment that, in the context of her stylish performances, seems appropriate for music that is almost 300 years old.

In the Sonatas, the Adagios are elegantly phrased, the Fugas spacious but never short of momentum, the third movements each made memorable in their way and the finales a wonderful combination of brilliant and relaxed. In the Partitas, a number of individual movements stand out: the B minor Allemande and its Double for the way in which Beyer allows the music to breathe, and the Corrente, where her bow conjures up swarms of butterflies fluttering and soaring through the air; the questioning, philosophic D minor Sarabande and that Chaconne, in which she sustains a deeply attractive sense of delicacy throughout; and the E major Loure – so danceable and beautifully ornamented in the repeats. In the end, the thread that runs

through all six works is Beyer's essential Frenchness, which is something Bach himself would have admired.

The Pisendel Sonata, perhaps more accessible for the player than the Bach, is appropriately positioned, presenting us with an apposite comparison, if ever one was needed, as well as a glimpse of Pisendel's sense of improvisation, taste for purplish harmony and love of angular syncopation. An enormously enjoyable set. **Julie Anne Sadle**

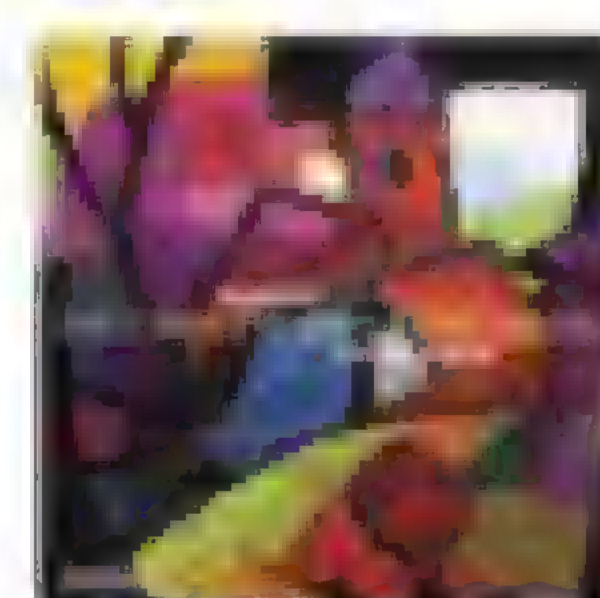
Dohnányi

'The Complete Solo Piano Music, Vol 1'

Four Rhapsodies, Op 11. Winterreigen, Op 13. Pastorale. Three Singular Pieces, Op 44. Waltz (from Delibes's Coppella)

Martin Roscoe *pf*

Hyperion (C) CDA67871 (81' • DDD)



First fruits of Roscoe's new Dohnányi traversal

The auspices are good even before you press the play button: Hyperion, Potton Hall, Ben Connellan (recording engineer), Jeremy Hayes (producer) – and a master pianist who has thoroughly immersed himself in the composer for years. In fact Martin Roscoe recorded the two piano quintets (5/95) and two of the present works (the Four Rhapsodies and *Pastorale* – 10/93) for ASV, as well as the two piano concertos for Hyperion (5/94), nearly 20 years ago.

The Four Rhapsodies, while having almost identical timings to Roscoe's first-rate earlier performances, are now more subtly characterised. The impish humour of No 3, for instance, not only the best known of the set but one of Dohnányi's best known works, is done with a lighter touch, and I prefer the warmer, more immediate presence of the piano to the chillier St George's, Brandon Hill. *Winterreigen*, 'Ten Bagatelles', all except the first and last dedicated to friends of Dohnányi in Vienna, begins and ends with Schumannesque quotes and wordplay. The composer's own 1956 recording, despite its claustrophobic acoustic, is not to be missed but Roscoe's more objective view and greater clarity bring their own rewards. *Pastorale*

('Hungarian Christmas Song') is charming; the first of the *Three Singular Pieces* (late works from 1951) has a time signature of 5/4 4/4 3/4 2/4 – the music is a repeated sequence of bars of those durations – while the last is a demanding *perpetuum mobile*. Rounded off with the *Coppélia* Waltz transcription (played with more elegance but less panache than Dohnányi in 1929, a full two minutes faster than Roscoe), this is a particularly happy start to the series. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Handel

Eight Suites, HWV426-33

Lisa Smirnova *pf*

ECM New Series (F) (2) 476 4107 (117' • DDD)



Smirnova with the first book of suites on a modern piano

To hear Handel's complete first book of suites played on the piano is a comparative rarity (among the few available alternatives are versions by Dina Ugorskaja, Keith Jarrett, Peter Weiss and Ragna Schirmer, none of which I have heard). His keyboard music has never rivalled Bach's in popularity and these suites, published in 1720, deserve to be far better known. The one movement that will be familiar to most is the Air and Variations from Suite No 5, the so-called 'Harmonious Blacksmith', paradoxically far from representative of the others which have more in common with Bach's Suites, reflecting something of Handel's German heritage and sharing the same 'mixed *goût*' developed by Georg Muffat – a synthesis of French dance, Italian elegance and 'the profundity and learned art of the Germans' (Charles Burney in his biography of Handel).

Despite initial misgivings, this is a truly delightful couple of discs from the Russo-Austrian Lisa Smirnova. She plays the Suites in an order of her own, starting with the fussily ornamented *Adagio* of Suite No 2. The piano is not as intimately placed as one might expect (very different from the close inspection given to Gavrilov in the D minor suite from Handel's second collection – EMI) but the ear soon adjusts – gratefully, for the sound picture not only allows the illusion of

a harpsichord when appropriate (try the Prelude to Suite No 1) but serves the clarity of rapid passagework extremely well (Suite No 3's concluding *Presto*, for instance). Smirnova's limpid touch and lucid tone are perfect partners for Handel and, with an excellent booklet, one can only look forward to Vol 2 with the 1727 collection in due course. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Liszt

Années de pèlerinage, S160-63

Bertrand Chamayou *pf*

Naïve ® V5260 (150' • DDD)

Liszt

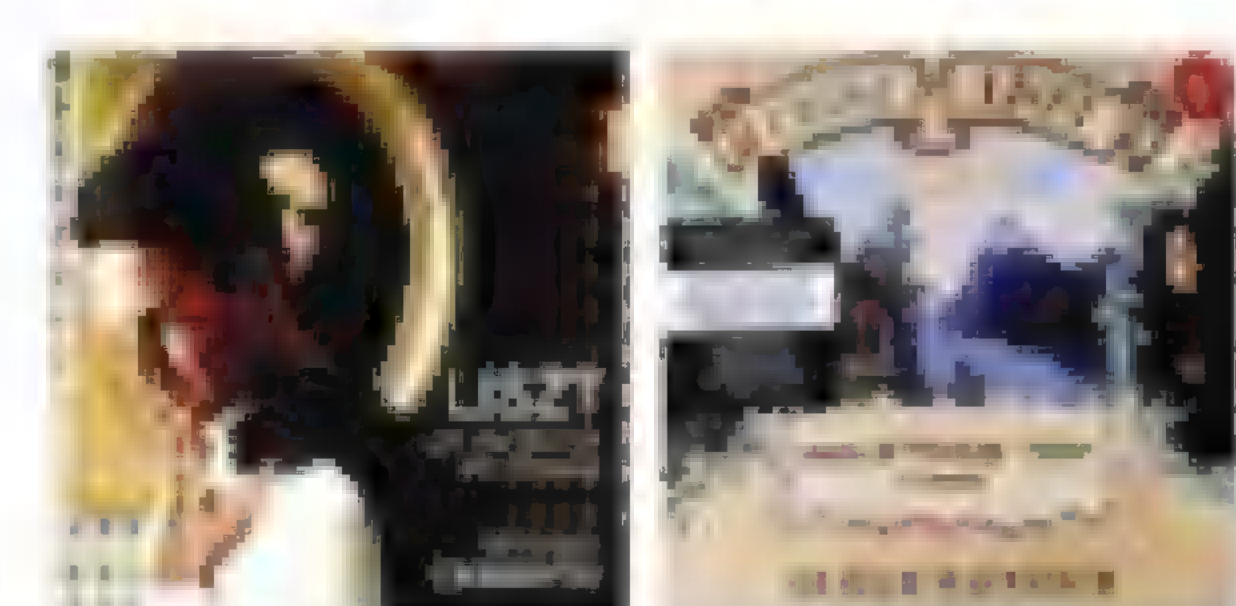
Années de pèlerinage: année 1, 'Suisse', S160.

Deux Légendes, S175

Oliver Schnyder *pf*

RCA Red Seal ® 88697 97224-2 (81' • DDD)

Bonus CD includes *Malédiction*, S121, for piano and string ensemble



A complete *Années* from France and the Swiss book from Germany

Here, like some valedictory blessing on the Liszt year, are tributes that would surely have brought tears of gratitude from the composer himself on hearing his genius so ardently celebrated and confirmed rather than ridiculed. Bertrand Chamayou, who gives us a complete *Années de pèlerinage*, is a young French pianist of an impeccable pedigree and one to make even the finest Lisztians look to their laurels. Hear him in the three Petrarch Sonnets, where a soaring sense of ecstasy is complemented by blazing eruptions of passion, everything engulfed as it were in restless and romantic enquiry. His 'Dante' Sonata brims over with a virtuoso savagery that dazzles and astounds (its whirling rhetoric emerging from a sulphurous pedal haze; a deeply imaginative touch) and yet even when muscles bulge and ripple with everything played to the hilt there is an added moving and confiding repose in the central *dolcissimo con amore*. There are further wonders in *Venezia e Napoli*, that garland of encores, an elemental octave uproar in 'Orage' and a shimmering tonal magic in 'Au bord d'une source' (both from Book 1, *Switzerland*).

Yet even more remarkable is Chamayou's profoundly expressive response to the third and final book (*Italy*), where he recreates Liszt's retreat into a dark night of the soul, music where religious solace is clouded and thwarted by doubt, anguish and bursts of fist-shaking despair. Such music faithfully mirrors Liszt's often desperate psychological state during his last years when, like



Space, eloquence and philosophy: Amandine Beyer plays Bach

Gerard Manley Hopkins, he woke 'to feel the fell of dark, not day'.

Then there is Oliver Schnyder, scarcely less distinguished in the Swiss *année*, coupled most strikingly with the two St Francis *Legends* and the shuddering, fragmented poetry of the *Malédiction* for piano and orchestra, a true *danse macabre*. A pianist of massive technical resource, this 28-year-old German pianist captures all the Byronic gloom of 'Vallée d'Obermann' and evokes St Francis's sermon to his flock with a poetic empathy that comes close to Wilhelm Kempff's unearthly spiritual beauty in his early Decca recording. Both pianists are sumptuously presented and recorded. **Bryce Morrison**

Mahler

Symphony No 6 (transc Briggs)

David Briggs *org*

Chestnut Music ® ② CHESTNUT008 (90' • DDD)

Recorded live on the Woehl Organ of St Katharine's Church, Oppenheim, May 18, 2011



Briggs live with the 'Tragic' in his own transcription

Gramophone readers should demand the answers to two questions in a review of any new recording of Mahler's Sixth. To the first

I can report that David Briggs performs the middle movements in the order *Andante – Scherzo*. He justifies this decision exhaustively in booklet-notes which analyse Mahler's work but, frustratingly, offer no insight on the organ transcription other than that it was prepared as a birthday gift for his wife who, in an act of husbandly ungallantry worthy of Mahler himself, Briggs informs the world, turned 50 in 2006.

To the second question, Briggs sidesteps the issue of hammer-blows in the finale by avoiding both (or all three) altogether; as well he might, since the organ of St Katharine's Church, Oppenheim, is devoid of any percussion effects. In fact what emerges from this dark and cloudy recording is an organ blessed with various shades of dull ochre but none of the vivid pseudo-orchestral effects one would have thought were essential in any organ recreation of a Mahler orchestral score. The somewhat inappropriate choice of instrument is because the recording was taken live from a performance Briggs gave at the Oppenheim Mahler Festival on the day marking the centenary of Mahler's death.

A smattering of coughs and sneezes confirms it was a live recording. We did not need the closing applause as well, and it seems unfortunate to have it here, not because it

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creates any distraction (those who object to such things will be pleased to learn the applause is tracked separately) but because the audience's apparently lukewarm response is quite out of proportion to the sheer dazzling brilliance of Briggs's playing. Transcribing Mahler's Sixth in its entirety for organ seems a dubious exercise – rather than offering new insights on a great work it merely draws attention to Mahler's tendency towards note-spinning and his reliance on orchestral effects – but as a display of breathtaking virtuosity and amazing musical intensity from one of the most highly gifted organists of our time, this is an invaluable disc.

Marc Rochester

Rachmaninov

Piano Sonata No 1, Op 28.

Variations on a Theme of Chopin, Op 22

Vladimir Ashkenazy *pf*

Decca 478 2938DH (62' • DDD)



Nearly the end for Ashkenazy's solo Rachmaninov traversal

Having had, frankly, an indifferent time in recent years as a pianist in the studio, this great musician here returns to something like top form. These may be his first recordings of these works but they sound as though they have been in his fingers for a long time.

The *Chopin* Variations inhabits the same pianistic and harmonic world as the Op 23 set of Preludes written at the same time (1903) and the Second Concerto completed two years earlier. Indeed, there are many passages that sound as though they are consciously referring to the Preludes and concerto, similarities that Ashkenazy evokes more keenly than most. At its heart is Var 16, surely one of Rachmaninov's most inspired yet least known melodies, one that might well have furnished a concerto theme (Semprini once recorded an effective piano-and-orchestra arrangement of it as if to prove the point). Ashkenazy's playing of this is quite bewitching, yet in Var 20 he shows that he can still scamper around the keyboard with the best of them. In fact he is consistently brisker throughout than Sudbin (BIS), Wild (Chesky, later Ivory Classics) and Berezovsky (Teldec – nla). Decca also usefully allots a separate track to each variation, unlike BIS and Chesky/Ivory.

The 25-year-old Berezovsky also paired the *Chopin* Variations with the D minor Sonata in his distinguished 1994 Teldec recording but his 74-year-old former compatriot wins on points, drawing together the diffuse elements of this sprawling work more cohesively, playing with more expressive depth and luxuriating in a burnished golden tone with a lovely cushioned bass. In all three movements,

notably the central *Lento*, Ashkenazy is quicker by a fair margin than Berezovsky. This is his most successful disc for some time, a notable adjunct to the renowned Rachmaninov recordings of his youth for the same label. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Chopin Vars – selected comparisons:

Sudbin (11/05) (BIS) BIS-SACD1518

Wild (IVOR) IC78002

Nelson Freire

'Rites of Passage'

Beethoven Piano Concerto No 5, 'Emperor' –

1st movt^o Chopin Nocturne No 7, Op 27 No 1.

Ballade No 4, Op 52. Etude, Op 10 No 4.

Waltz No 14, Op *posth.* Mazurka No 23, Op 33 No 2.

Scherzo No 1, Op 20

Nelson Freire *pf*^o Orchestra of the Municipal Theatre

of Rio de Janeiro / Nino Stinca

Sanctus 5 SCSHO26 (51' • ADD)

Recorded ^olive 1957



Live and studio: the 12-year-old Freire at home in Brazil

Fans of the great Nelson Freire will, like me, be as surprised as they are intrigued to read of the existence of this recording. It was made in 1957 when Freire was just 12, shortly after his participation in the First International Competition of Rio de Janeiro. The youngest of the 47 competitors, he was awarded the highest number of marks in the qualifying rounds, having prepared the repertoire in just one month. In the end he was placed ninth. Generously, Alexander Jenner, who won first prize, autographed Freire's programme 'To the real winner of the competition'.

The resulting LP was studio-recorded shortly afterwards in just two hours. It should have come with an audio health warning on the cover (this from someone who revels in the hiss and crackle of shellac). The studio is small, the piano has the sonority of a half-grand, it has worn felt on the pedal action and the sound distorts – not so much that the impressive execution and expressive nuances of an extraordinary prodigy are obscured, but it certainly distracts from the music. You would hardly credit that the playing of the B minor Scherzo, which he had studied and memorised in two weeks, and F minor Ballade is that of a pianist not yet in his teens.

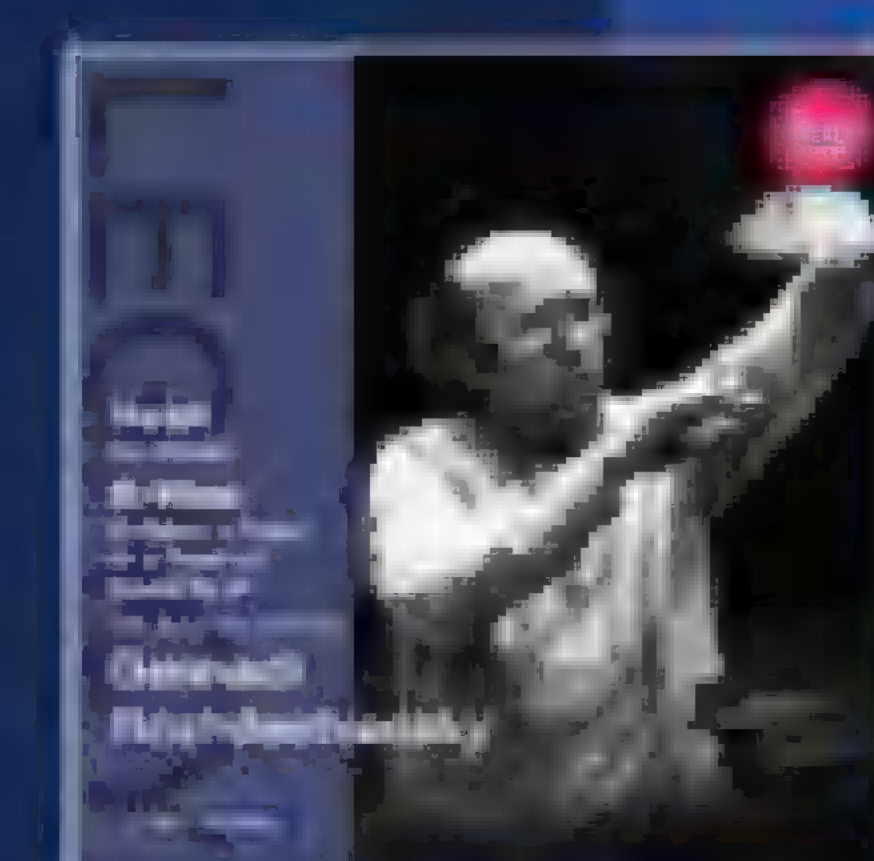
To follow the six LP tracks comes the first movement (only) of the *Emperor*, a live broadcast of Freire's actual performance given for the finals of the piano competition. It is astonishingly mature but the sound quality is comparable to listening to the concert on shortwave. Freire's followers won't mind a bit. There is a good booklet in English/Portuguese and a second quite different text in French only.

Jeremy Nicholas

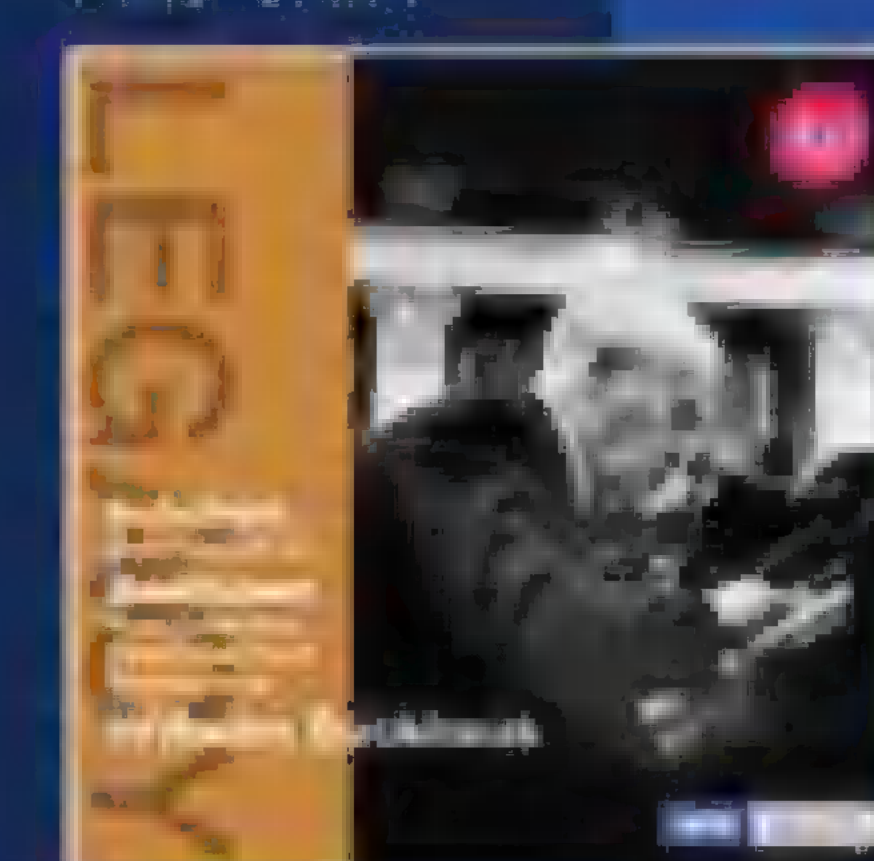


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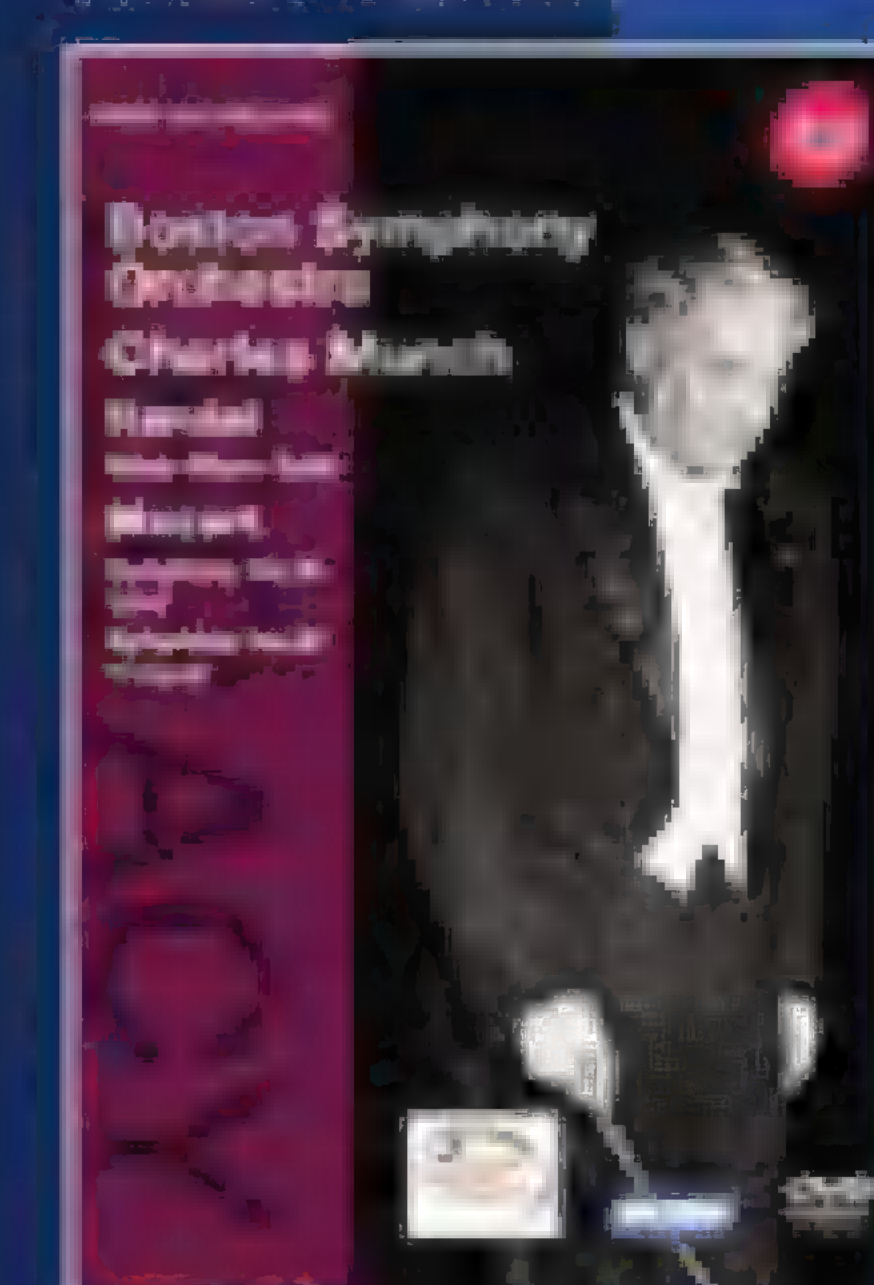
February



Gennadi Rozhdestvensky
Hobai • Britten



Wilhelm Backhaus
Schubert • Beethoven



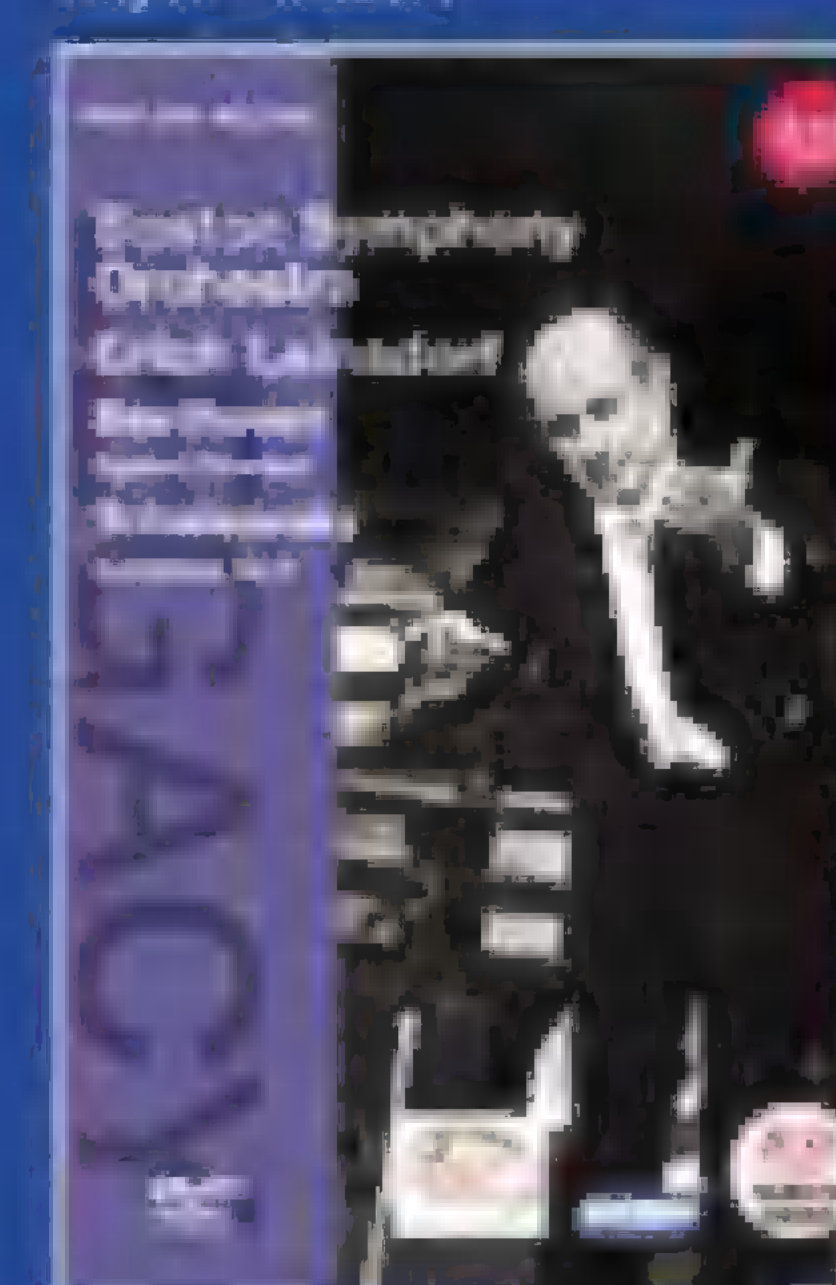
Charles Munch
Handel • Mozart



William Steinberg
Beethoven: Missa solenne

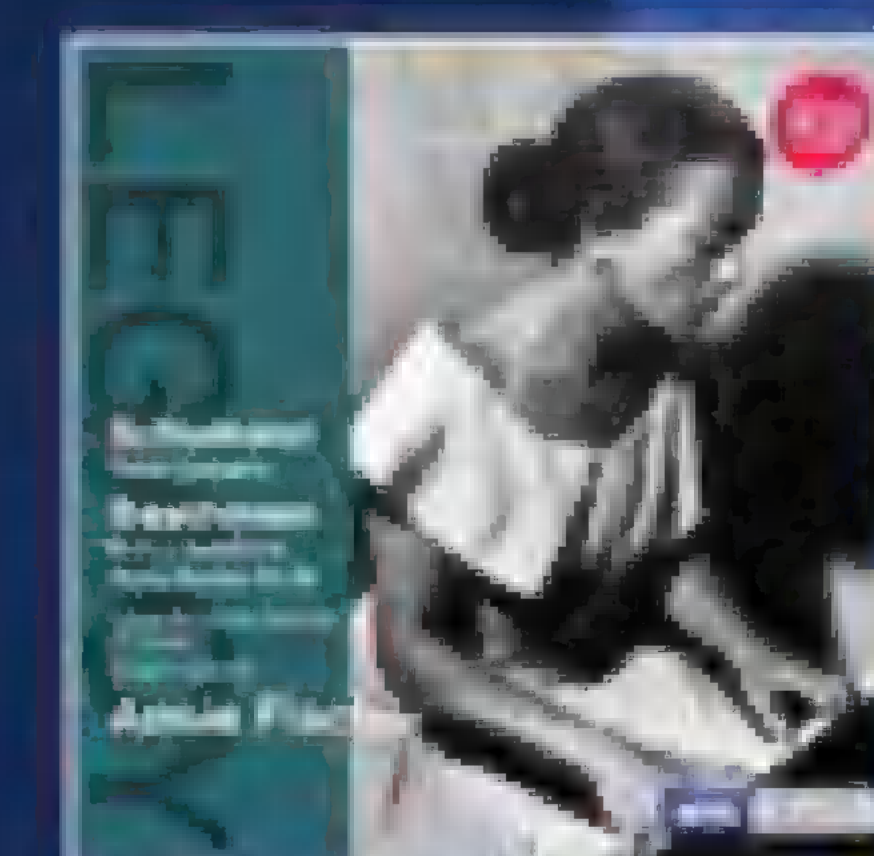


Amadeus Quartet
Haydn • Mozart

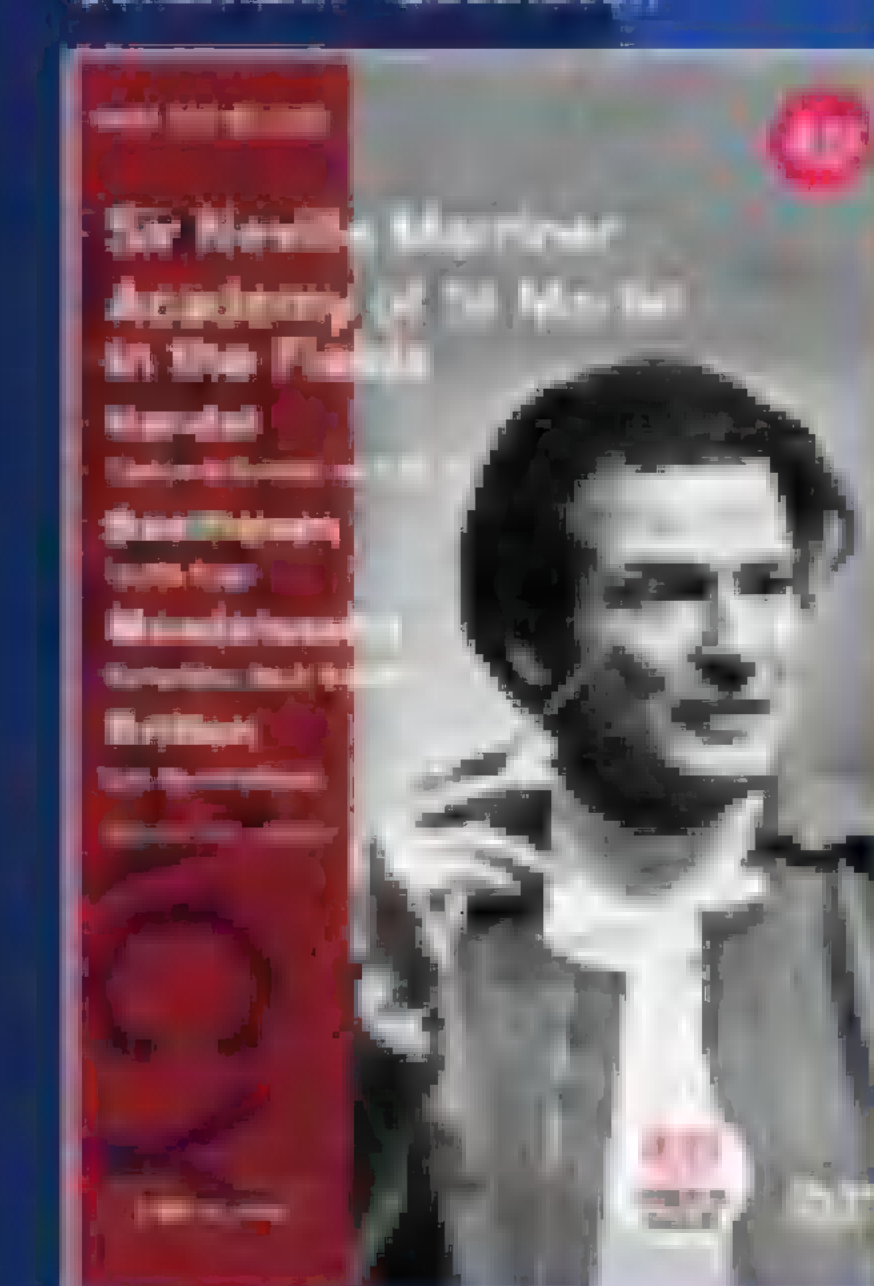


Erich Leinsdorf
Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5

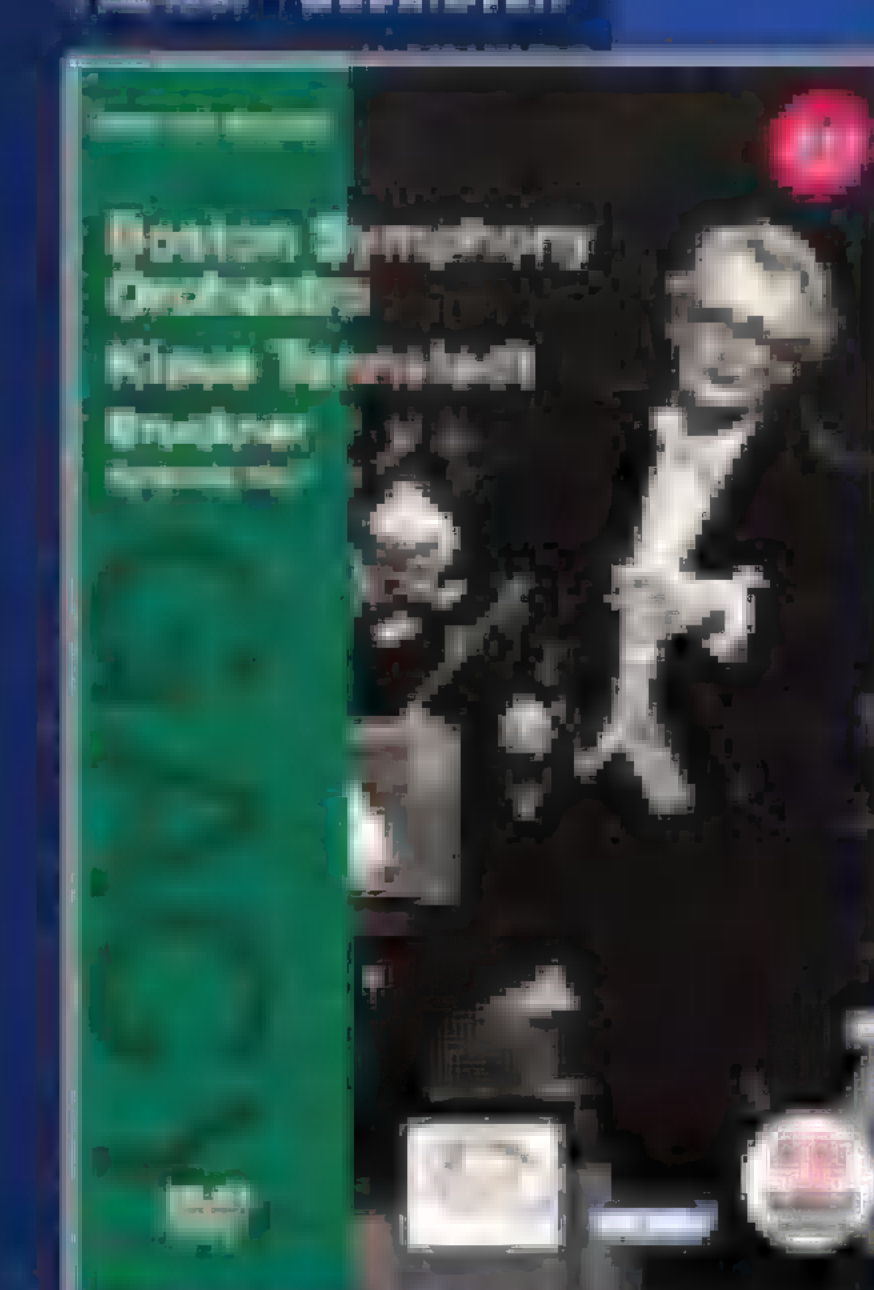
March



Annie Fischer
Schumann • Beethoven



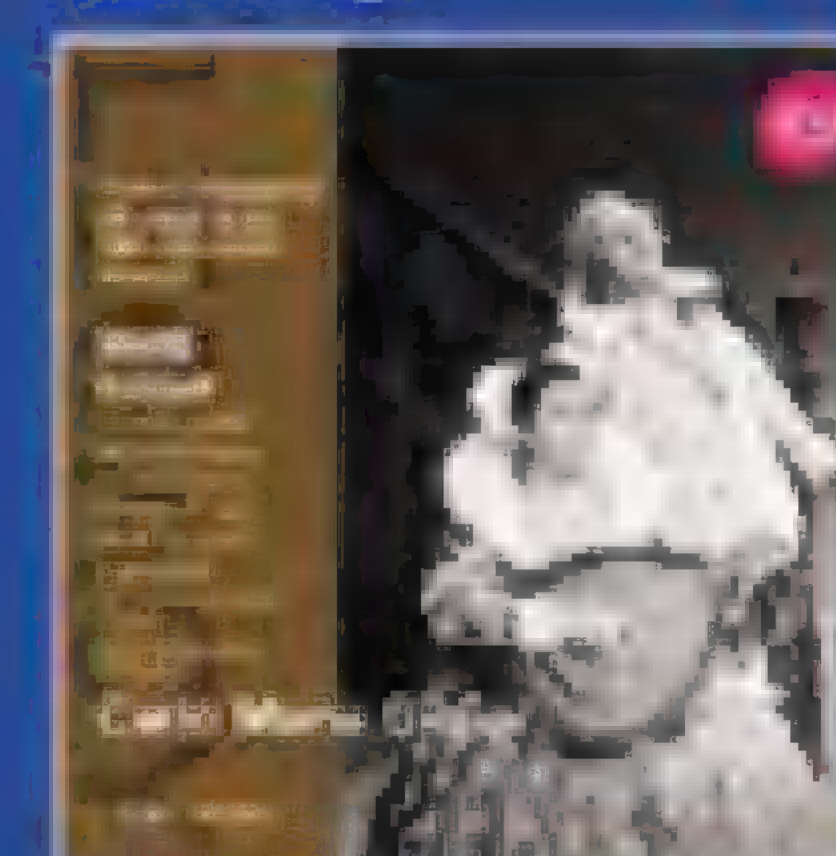
Sir Neville Marriner
Handel • Beethoven



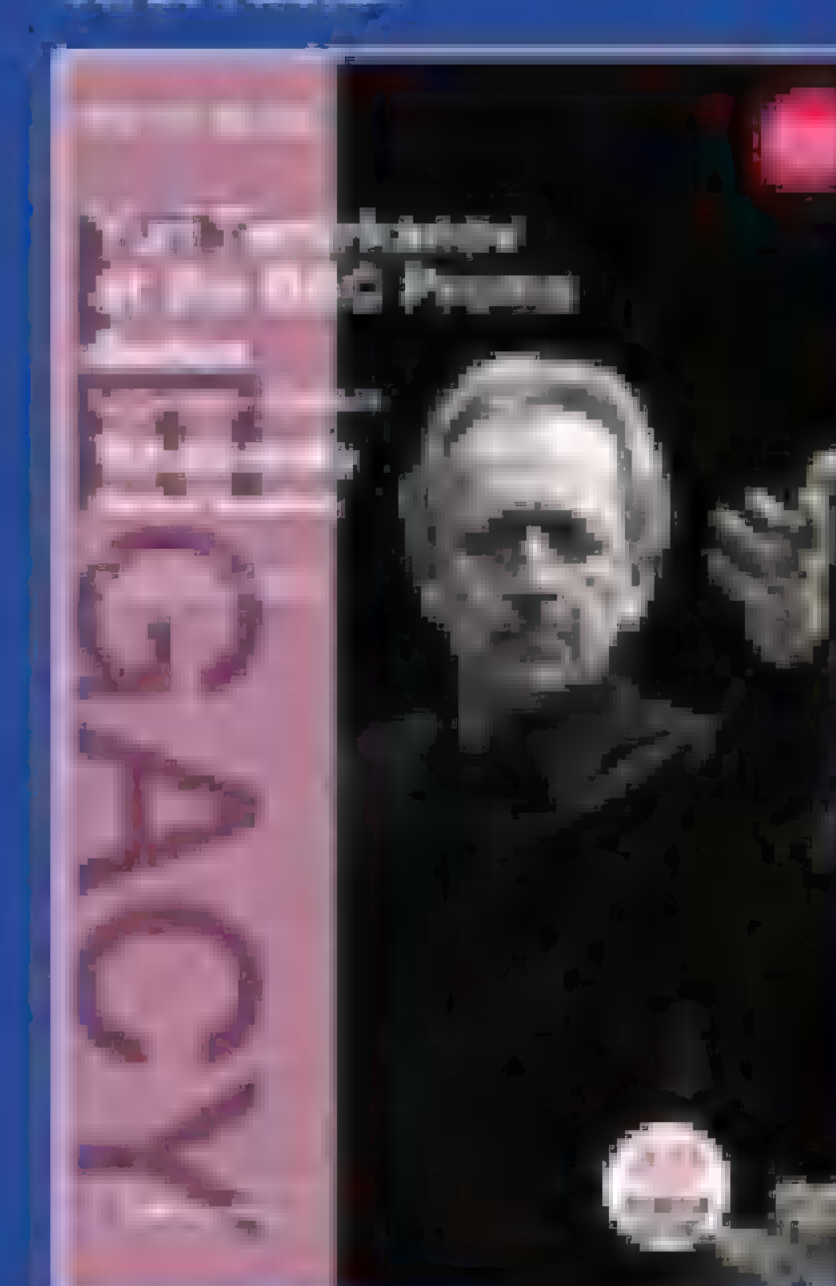
Klaus Tennstedt
Bruckner: Symphony No. 7



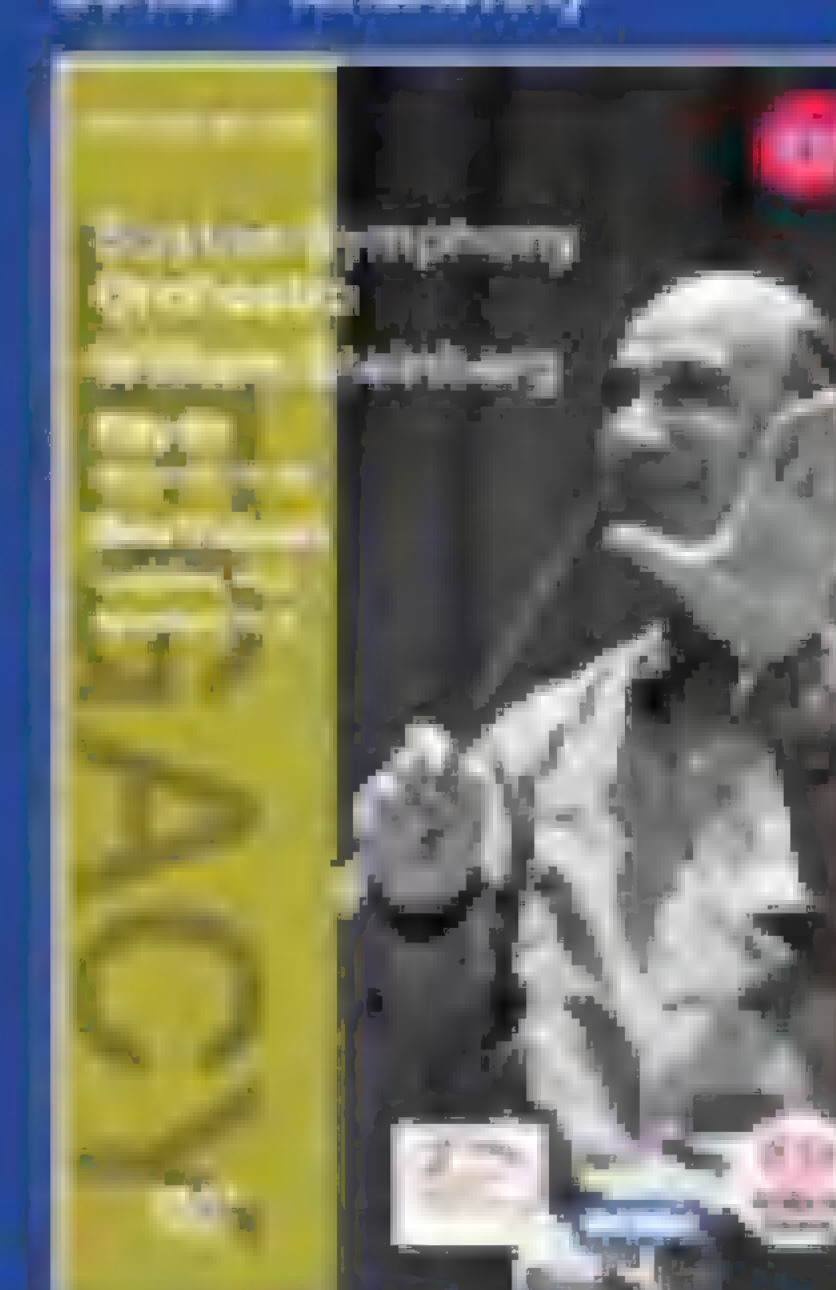
Sir Adrian Boult
Brahms • Elgar



Carlo Maria Giulini
Verdi: Falstaff



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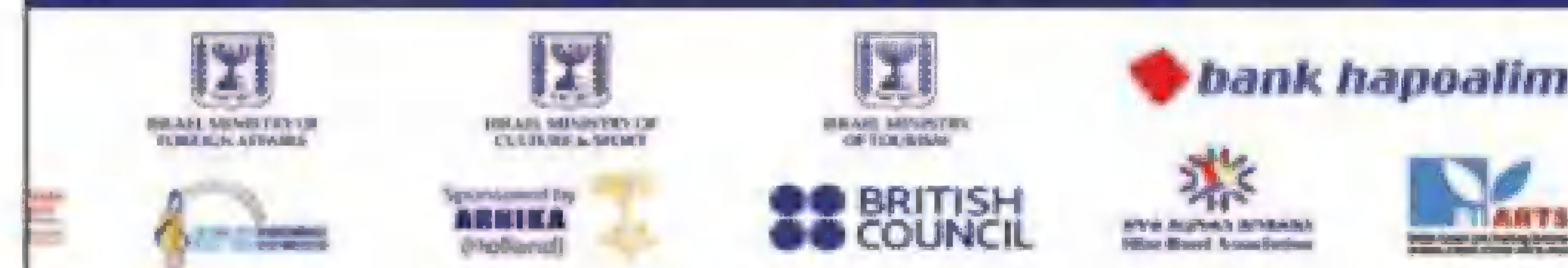
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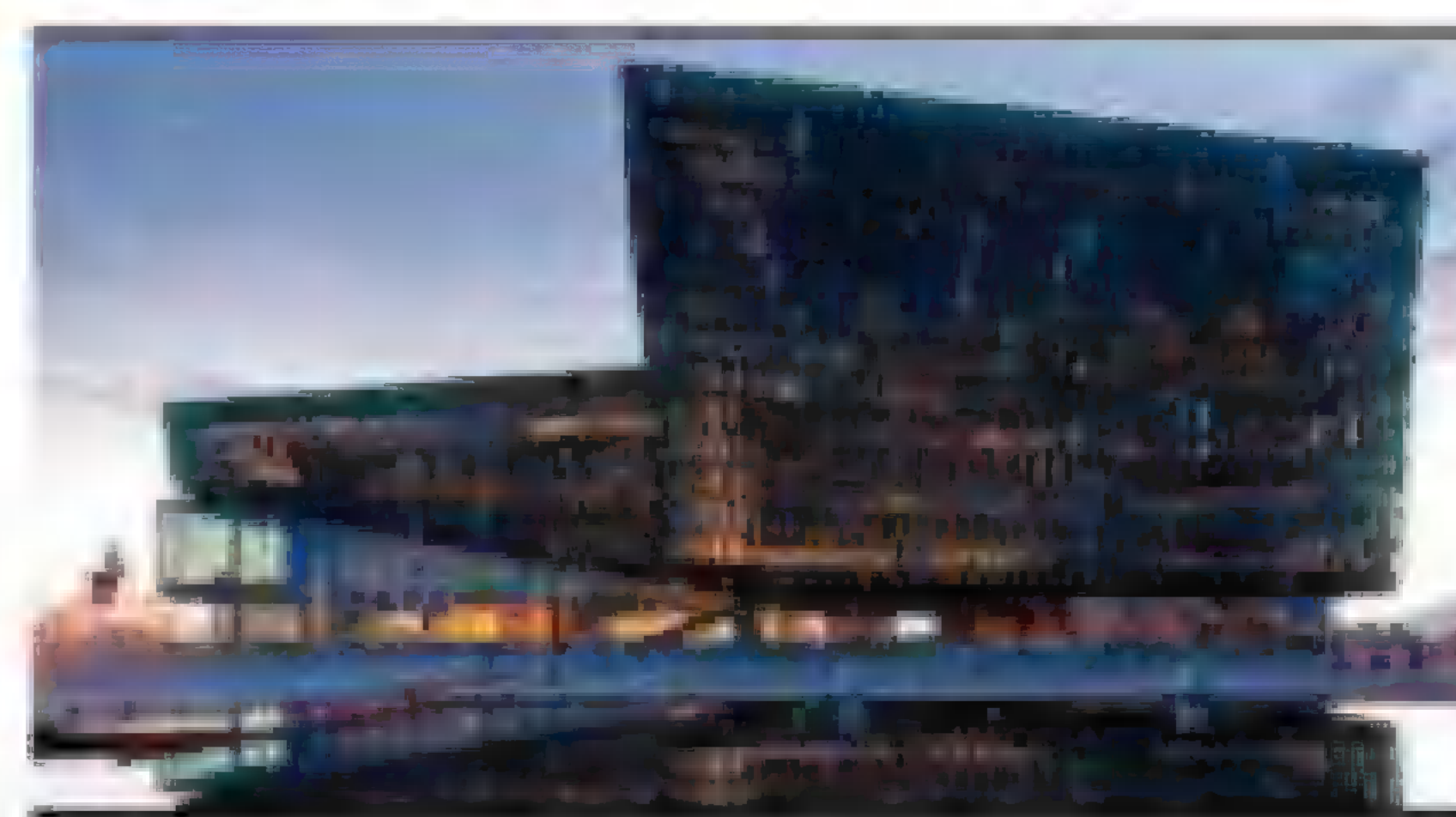
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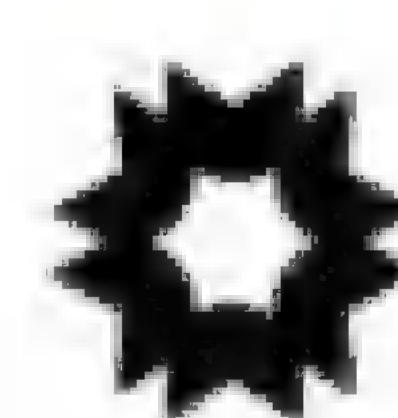
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The striking talent of Cyprien Katsaris is the latest to find a home on an artist-led label. **Bryce Morrison** listens to his most recent releases



Sure-footed virtuoso: Cyprien Katsaris

Greek-born but Paris-trained Cyprien Katsaris may well be the most dazzling and innovative of all living virtuosos. Having recorded for many labels (his way with the finale of Chopin's Second Sonata is among the most wickedly provocative performances on record), he has since formed his own label, Piano21, allowing him the freedom to pursue and explore a vast range of repertoire, much of it uncongenial to more commercially minded companies. And here, pride of place must go to four out of eight CDs devoted to **Liszt**.

In the B minor Sonata, taken from a live 1973 recital, Katsaris is as musically intrepid as he is technically blinding. Headstrong he may be but his performance blazes with passion and an elemental virtuosity that lesser pianists can only envy. He is as incense-laden as the most ardent Catholic could wish in the 'Bénédiction' and in all four *Mephisto Waltzes* (he resists Leslie Howard's admirable completion to No 4),

he shows a total empathy with Liszt's satanic frolics. There are lavish embellishments in five of the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* that would surely have won Liszt's plaudits and time

'Hearing Katsaris romp through Nazareth's Odeon and listening to his verbal commentary, you realise he is a born cabaret artist'

and again Katsaris takes you out of a comfort zone to set your mind and senses reeling. His performance of the Second Concerto is the most spine-tingling on record and yet, even more remarkably, Katsaris is no less attuned to the dark-hued austerity of works such as *Unstern!*, *Nuages gris* and the hair-raising devilry at the heart of the *Trauer Vorspiel und Trauermarsch* (was Liszt, as once Blake considered Milton, of the devil's party without knowing it, the reverse side of the religious coin?). Again, you are

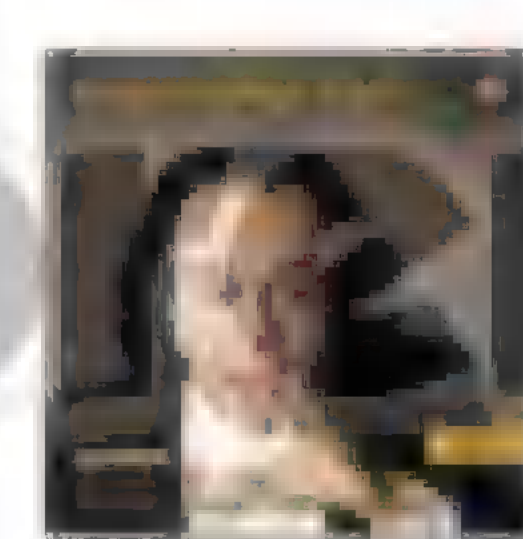
left in awe at the overflowing cornucopia of Katsaris's gifts when you hear him in the **Beethoven-Liszt** symphony transcriptions (on independent label Piano Classics). For in music where Beethoven's originals are unclouded by excess or extravagance, the playing is enough to have made even Horowitz wonder at such engulfing but taut and disciplined brilliance.

Liszt apart, there are further marvels in Katsaris's Mozart, Schubert and, most entertainingly, in his DVD tour of Latin America, **Live in Shanghai** in 2007. Whether in Peru, Paraguay, Brazil, Cuba, Argentina or Mexico, he tells us, as in the subtitle of his concert, that 'music knows no frontiers'. True, some of the music is of the Christmas-cracker variety, but when you turn to Villa-Lobos's *Alma Brasileira* and most of all a Piazzolla selection, you are hearing music of genuine wit and sophistication. Katsaris's romp through Ernesto Nazareth's *Odeon* and verbal commentary and asides make you realise that he is, among so much else, a born cabaret artist. Amazingly, he has an innate understanding of music where there is no division between 'serious' and 'popular' idioms; a heady combination of café, folk, gaucho and Afro-American rhythm and melody.

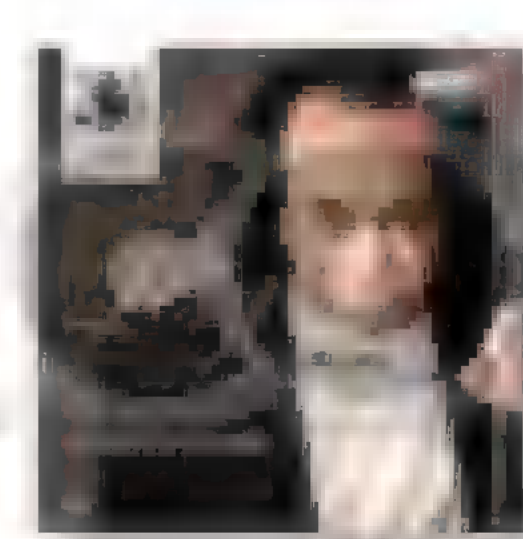
In Viennese classics, Katsaris has less opportunity to flex a gypsy abandon that recalls his one-time mentor Georges Cziffra, yet he is never less than personal and engaging. I would not class his **Mozart** with, say, Kempff, Curzon or Perahia, who achieve a different subtlety, refinement and tonal chiaroscuro. Yet it is hard to resist his effervescence in the K382 Rondo or in his sampling of six cadenzas for K175 (four by Mozart, two by Katsaris). In **Schubert's** *Ländler*, Katsaris is all charm and affection, and if he is more salonish than devotional in the B flat Sonata, he excels in three Schubert-Liszt transcriptions, where he confirms Liszt's belief that Schubert was 'the most poetic of all composers'.

All in all, these records, in all their infinite variety, are a testament to an endless range and brio. Cyprien Katsaris's is a unique voice, serious, provocative, mischievous and compelling, a vivid and extraordinary example of recreative genius. **G**

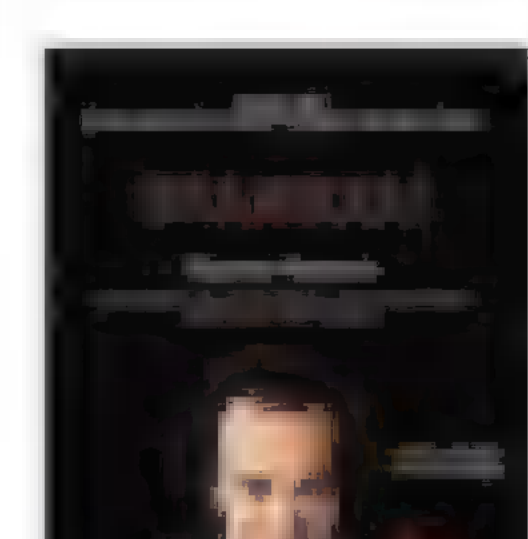
THE RECORDINGS



Liszt
'Katsaris Plays Liszt'
Vol 1 (1975-2011)
Katsaris
Piano21 (F) (2) P21 041N



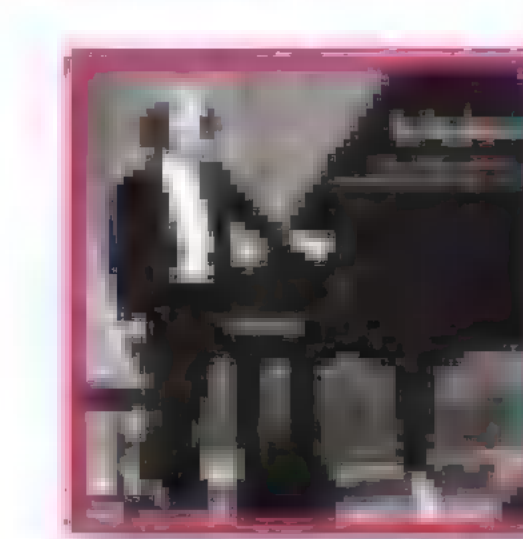
Beethoven/Liszt
Syms Nos 4 & 5 **Liszt**
Mephisto Waltzes, etc
(1985-89) Katsaris
Piano Classics (F) (2)
PCLD0025



'Live in Shanghai'
(pp2007) Katsaris
Piano21 (F) DVD
P21 035N



Mozart
'Cpte Pf Concs'
Vol 7 (1997-99)
Katsaris; Salzburg
Chbr Philh / Lee
Piano 21 (F) P21 039N



Schubert
Pf Son No 21, etc
(pp1983) Katsaris
Piano21 (F) (2)
P21 042A



David Gutman reviews
Mahler from Julie Boulianne:
*'Few such accomplished exponents of Rossini
are able to summon up the right atmosphere
for Mahler'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 71



Fabrice Fitch rounds up
reissued choral sets:
*'An impressive accomplishment...including a
rare outing for the English-texted version of
Spem in alium'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 77

JS Bach

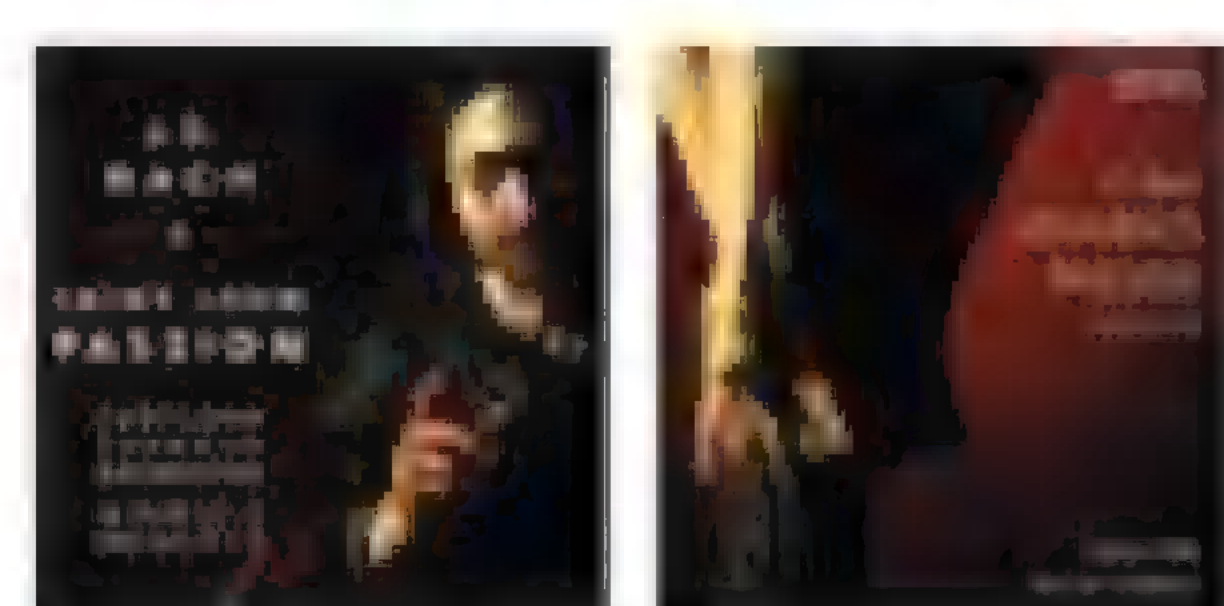
St John Passion, BWV245 (1724 version)

Charles Daniels *ten* Evangelist Joshua Hopkins *bass*
Christus Shannon Mercer *sop* Matthew White
counterten Jacques-Olivier Chartier *ten* Tyler Duncan
bass Cappella Romana; Portland Baroque Orchestra /
Monica Huggett *vn*
Avie (M) ② AV2236 (101' • DDD • T/U)

JS Bach

St John Passion, BWV245 (1749 version)

Hans Jörg Mammel *ten* Evangelist Markus Flaig *bass*
Christus Sabine Goetz, Amaryllis Dieltiens *sops*
Elisabeth Popien *contr* Alexander Schneider
counterten Georg Poplutz *ten* Wolf Matthias Friedrich
bass Cantus Cölln / Konrad Junghänel
Accent (F) ② ACC24251 (110' • DDD • T/U)



One-per-part passions from Huggett in Portland and Junghänel in Cologne. Both of these new recordings adopt the one-voice-per-part method ('OVPP'), which means concertino solo singers perform throughout but are reinforced by ripieno voices in choruses, etc. Cappella Romana and the Portland Baroque Orchestra feature 12 singers and 14 players, and Monica Huggett opts to perform Bach's first and original 1724 scheme. Konrad Junghänel and his collaborators in Cantus Cölln field a slightly smaller group of eight singers and 12 instrumentalists but choose Bach's final version, prepared in 1749. Unlike the peculiar substitutions made in 1725 or the adjustments intended for an aborted 1739 performance, the 1724 and 1749 lists of contents appear almost identical, but there are some fascinating distinguishing details that carry significance if a serious reconstruction is to be attempted.

For example, Huggett correctly uses a pair of *viole d'amore* for 'Erwäge' (sung sublimely by Jacques-Olivier Chartier), whereas Cantus Cölln's mellifluous Georg Poplutz rightly sings this with different words ('Mein Jesu, ach!'), and with obbligato parts played compassionately by two muted violins. Huggett includes an archlute in movements

where Bach intended it in 1724 but renowned lutenist Junghänel avoids playing his own instrument because it was not used in 1749. The Portland Baroque Orchestra adopts Pieter Dirksen's theory that perhaps there were no flutes in 1724, so most flute parts are transferred instead to oboes, with the exception of the flute solo in 'Ich folge dir gleichfalls', which is played gracefully by Huggett on the violin (Junghänel follows Bach's 1749 specification of two flutes in unison). Although the Portlanders use six violins rather than Cantus Cölln's two, the smaller group tends to achieve a richer width of expressive sonorities.

Cantus Cölln's vastly experienced vocal ensemble has often proved that its sum is greater than its individual parts but on this occasion the solo singing is also consistently effective. Hans Jörg Mammel evangelises with descriptive solemnity and rhetorical authority, I admired Markus Flaig's compassionate singing of 'Betrachte, meine Seel' (notable for Carsten Lohff's imaginative yet gentle organ realisation), and time seems to stand still for Elisabeth Popien's profoundly moving dialogue with gambist Mienieke van der Velden in 'Es ist vollbracht'. For the Portlanders, Charles Daniels weaves his narration with beguiling eloquence and Tyler Duncan sings 'Eilt, ihr angefochtenen' with poised agility (his counterpart Wolf Matthias Friedrich is heartily extrovert). Huggett's astonishingly quick pace for the opening chorus 'Herr, unser Herrscher' does not prohibit a smooth contribution from Cappella Romana but the Oregonians' meticulous *turba* interjections seldom project theatricality. Cantus Cölln keenly communicate the language's biting consonants and shape dramatic counterpoint vividly (eg 'Wäre dieser nicht ein Übeltäter'). Although Huggett's direction is always neat, Junghänel conjures an absorbing mood of essential story-telling; he takes more than a minute longer over pacing 'Ruht wohl' – a decision which provides compelling sentimental emphasis.

The philosophy of these OVPP performances places them in a distinguished discography, most notably Andrew Parrott's

groundbreaking performance, the impressive Netherlands Bach Society and the poignant interpretation of the Ricercar Consort. Both newcomers are the product of strong musicianship, detailed thinking and artistic integrity, and Cantus Cölln's effort becomes another of my favourite examples of this approach to the *St John Passion*.

David Vickers

Selected comparisons:

Taverner Consort & Players, Parrott

(5/91⁸) (VIRG) 562068-2

Netherlands Bach Soc, Veldboven

(3/05) (CHNN) CCSSA22005

Ricercar Consort, Pierlot (7/11) (MIRA) MIR136

Barber • Berlioz • Britten

Barber Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op 24

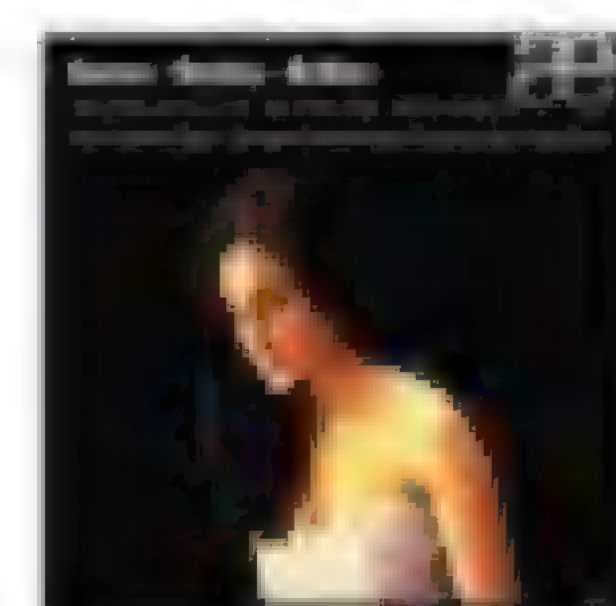
Berlioz Les nuits d'été, Op 7

Britten Les illuminations, Op 18

Anne-Catherine Gillet *sop*

Liège Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Paul Daniel

Aeon (F) AECD1113 (66' • DDD)



Descriptive song-cycles from a star soprano of La Monnaie

Now in her mid-30s, Anne-Catherine Gillet has made her name in the opera house in roles such as Micaëla in *Carmen* and Sophie in *Werther*, where the gentle vibrato at the top of her voice brings a touching vulnerability. She is recognisably the same singer on her first recital disc here but the programme demands more. It was ambitious of the Belgian soprano to step forwards as one of the few (the first?) non-English-speaker to record Barber's *Knoxville*. She sings the text with little sign of an accent, other than an affected American twang that comes and goes, but it would be hard to claim that she brings this nostalgic picture of Tennessee childhood to life with anything like the vividness of Dawn Upshaw or Leontyne Price.

Singing in her native French, she treats the Berlioz and Britten with a light touch. There is not much variety of colour in *Les nuits d'été*, either from the singer or the thin-toned orchestra. Gillet and her conductor, Paul Daniel, are at their best in a well-paced 'Le spectre de la rose', which captures the lilt of



The pendant lamps and contemporary stained glass of St Anne's Chapel, Marylhurst, Oregon, the venue for Portland Baroque's St John Passion

the dance to perfection. Their haltingly slow 'Au cimetière' gets bogged down, Daniel being less persuasive at slow speeds throughout. It is *Les illuminations* that gets the best performance of the three. The Liège players get some real bite out of the rhythms and Gillet lets her imagination take flight, pointing up the spiky brilliance of 'Marine' and revealing the wild side to the world Rimbaud envisages in 'Parade'. Not a first choice for any of the three works involved, though. **Richard Fairman**

Berlioz • Mahler • Wagner

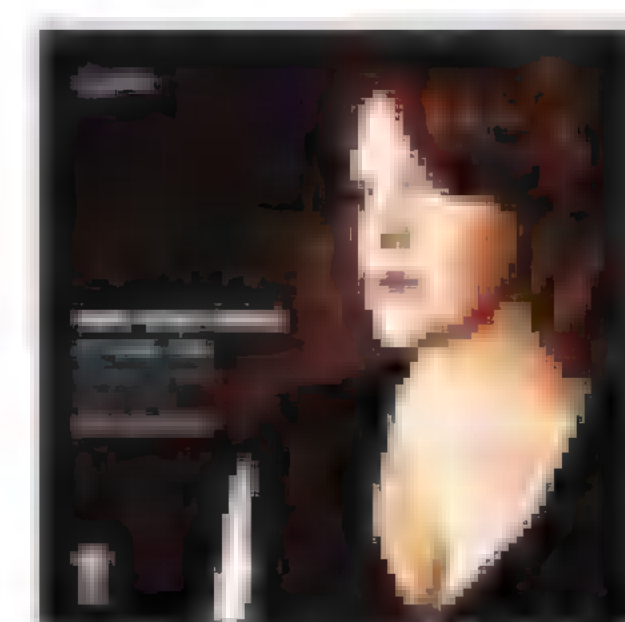
Berlioz *Les nuits d'été* **Mahler** Rückert-Lieder

Wagner Wesendonck-Lieder

Marie-Nicole Lemieux *contr* **Daniel Blumenthal** *pf*

Cypres © CYP8605 (65' • DDD)

Recorded 2000



Canadian mezzo in 'deep water' repertoire recorded in 2000

What a curious first impression Marie-Nicole Lemieux's Berlioz/Wagner/Mahler recital makes in the wake of her fine Schumann disc (Naïve, 4/10) and compelling concert performances of *Das Lied von der Erde* of late. In this disc, the voice sounds less disciplined and unduly concerned with maintaining her trademark lush tone – especially in contrast to the more text-based mastery of Anne Sofie von Otter's *Les nuits d'été*. Pianist Daniel Blumenthal seems surprisingly superficial

compared to his Schumann. The microphones maintain an all-too-safe distance from the musicians, creating a pleasant ambience that lacks impact. Have these important artists taken a step backwards?

No. Upon scrutinising the booklet, one discovers that this recording dates from 2000. What a relief. Only then can one enjoy the experience of hearing a promising pair of artists finding their way into the deep waters of Wagner and Mahler, and appreciate how far they've come since then. Lemieux's conspicuous pitch misadventures that are heard in several vocal leaps here have, to judge from recent discs, been minimised.

The unguarded emotionalism that has made this not-so-cool Canadian endearing is in evidence in almost every song here, with a particularly penetrating response to 'Schmerzen' in the Wesendonck songs. However, such interpretative responses come in primary colours, tempered by a steady stream of vocal tone and appearing in less clear relief than in the cleaner vocalism one now hears from her. The final line of 'Träume', though, clearly points to what she has become: the words describe dreams being put to rest in a grave – a tricky combination of ethereal and concrete imagery. Her reading gives death a gentle but inescapable finality, sung in a way that's not overcooked but telegraphs the implied significance of giving up one's illusions. That deft avoidance of

Gothic morbidity also serves her well in Mahler's 'Um Mitternacht'.

In Berlioz, her French isn't especially articulate (again, tone takes precedence) but she does find an appropriate sense of mystery in several songs. Here and there, Blumenthal explores rubato possibilities, compensating with nuance for the lack of the larger sound that one is used to hearing in the more-often-performed orchestral versions. So this isn't a disc to be had for the repertoire (besides von Otter in Berlioz, Julia Varady is a good choice for the Wagner and Christa Ludwig is great with the Mahler), though admirers of Lemieux will understand and appreciate this artist more having heard this recital. It's at least worth a download.

David Patrick Stearns

Berlioz – selected comparison:

Von Otter, Musiciens du Louvre, Minkowski

(2/12) (NAIV) V5286

Wagner – selected comparison:

Varady, DSO Berlin, Fischer-Dieskau (ORFE) C467 981A

Mahler – selected comparison:

Ludwig, BPO, Karajan

(12/75th) (DG) 453 040-2GTA2 or 457 716-2GOR2

Brahms

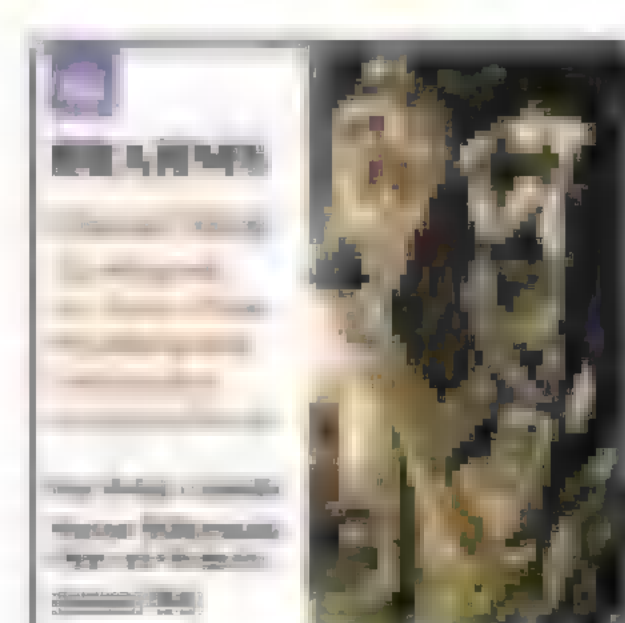
Ave Maria, Op 12. *Begräbnisgesang*, Op 13.

Alto Rhapsody, Op 53^a. *Schicksalslied*, Op 54.

Nänie, Op 82. *Gesang der Parzen*, Op 89

^a**Ewa Wolak** *contr* **Warsaw Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra / Antoni Wit**

Naxos © 8 572694 (70' • DDD • T/t)



Wit with Brahms from Warsaw Philharmonic Hall

Antoni Wit is proving to be one of Naxos's greatest assets, a conductor of strong personality who puts musical values first, yet can readily create both drama and spontaneity in the recording studio. Moreover, Ewa Wolak is a rich-toned contralto, without a hint of a wobble, who can evoke exactly the kind of lyrical drama which the lovely *Alto Rhapsody* commands. I cannot say more than her account reminds one of Dame Janet Baker, and the chorale at the work's close is richly satisfying, with the Warsaw Philharmonic Choir singing with great eloquence. The collection opens invitingly with the *Ave Maria*, originally scored for women's choir and organ but here with an orchestral accompaniment to added effect. The choral singing is radiant in its glowing simplicity.

Begräbnisgesang ('Funeral Hymn') was written in 1858, the same year as the *Ave Maria*, and is notable for its sonorously scored accompaniment for woodwind, horns, three trombones and timpani. It is like a richly solemn concert funeral march and indeed its music was undoubtedly inspired by the death of Robert Schumann.

The unusual and imaginative *Schicksalslied* ('Song of Destiny') sets the words of the patriotic Greek hero Hyperion. Although it opens and closes underpinned with the throb of a drumbeat, the music is essentially lyrical, full of yearning, representing the world of the blessed spirits. Yet there is a tempestuous central section suggesting that 'stumbling' humanity has no place to rest.

Nänie is a setting of Schiller in three sections and is essentially a classical lament for the passing of beauty, with allusions in the text to familiar Classical figures including Venus, Adonis, Achilles, Pluto and the fate of Eurydice. This is more characteristic, full-bodied, richly Brahmsian choral writing, easily melodic and obviously relished by the Warsaw singers.

Gesang des Parzen ('Song of the Fates') draws on the plot of Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* and in particular the heroine's conflict between her duty to sacrifice Orestes and her desire to escape with him. It is dramatically written for six-part chorus but, enjoyable as it is it, proves that Brahms was no opera composer. Yet, altogether, this super-budget collection is marvellously sung and played.

Ivan March

Debussy

Nuit d'étoiles. Pantomime. Clair de lune. Pierrot. Apparition. En sourdine. Fête galante. Romance (L'âme évaporée). Les cloches. Rondel chinois.

Flots, palmes, sables^b. La romance d'Ariel. Regret. Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau. Coquetterie posthume. L'archet. Romance. Les elfes. La damoiselle élue^a

Natalie Dessay *sop* Philippe Cassard *pf* with

^aKarine Deshayes *mez* ^bCatherine Michel *hp*

^bJeune Choeur de Paris

Virgin Classics © 730769-2 (73' • DDD • T/I)



Unpublished Vasnier songs for Dessay's return to Debussy

Natalie Dessay returns to recording French *mélodies* for the first time since she made a few cameo appearances on the early-1990s set of complete Fauré songs (REM Editions). And for so many reasons, it's a pity this recording didn't happen sooner. The high-velocity singing of her signature *bel canto* repertoire only occasionally reveals her intelligent balance of vocal *legato* and word articulation, as well as a slightly grainy warmth of tone that's particularly welcome amid the astringency that has set into her coloratura technique in recent years. In some ways, I feel as if I'm hearing her voice for the first time. The recital also includes first recordings of four early Debussy songs, one of which is significant. And it's always great to hear pianist Philippe Cassard, who so memorably collaborated with Veronique Dietschy in her early-'90s Debussy recital (Adès).

So many aspects of Dessay's disc are first-class – even the Jeune Choeur de Paris has airtight chord tunings that make the conclusion of *La damoiselle élue* particularly magical – you wonder why, oh why, couldn't Dessay have left her Metropolitan Opera vibrato at the Metropolitan Opera? The Zen-like inner calm many singers have used to capture the awe and detail of Debussy's nature studies isn't essential, especially in a recital that favours early, less characteristic works. Certainly calm doesn't come naturally to a personality as kinetic as Dessay's. (Even her *Mélisande* can be aggressively scarred.)

However, the intrusion of her increasingly wide vibrato makes itself felt in nearly every song. Whenever the vocal line goes into the upper range and requires a healthy climax, her voice explodes with an amplitude that has allowed her to be heard in the world's great opera houses but feels like a large vocal ink-blot in Debussy. 'Regret' is a downright mess. Least troubled, luckily, is the lovely *La damoiselle élue*, in which Dessay projects a fragile longing that gives this piece an extra dramatic edge that's so often lacking (and aided by Cassard's pianism, which shapes the instrumental portion so effectively you might never want to hear the more amorphous orchestration ever again). So many phrases are so cleanly managed and effectively use vocal colour to tell the story of the song. For

some, interest in the unpublished items will override any reservations about Dessay's vocalism. All four apparently hail from the collection of 23 songs Debussy wrote over four years for Marie-Blanche Vasnier, the first in a series of older, married women that the composer romanced. Debussy was an 18-year-old singing-class accompanist when they met; she was an accomplished coloratura soprano and provided the composer with a laboratory of sorts. Most significant is the seven-minute ballad 'Les elfes' – an adult, sexually charged counterpart to Schubert's popular 'Der Erlkönig' in which the victim isn't a child but a knight who is riding home to his fiancée when he is claimed by an elf princess. Though lacking the nervous dramatic impetus of Schubert, Debussy has his own way of story-telling through the kind of text-accentuating vocal lines that would later make *Pelléas et Mélisande* the masterpiece that it is, and with harmonic touches that build tension from within. No surprise that Dessay brilliantly handles the dialogue among the song's characters and delivers some of the best vocal shading of the disc, effectively draining the colour out of her voice when the elf princess admits that she is, in fact, dead. It's an extremely effective performance but would have been more so five years ago, when the voice had less mileage. **David Patrick Stearns**

Delius

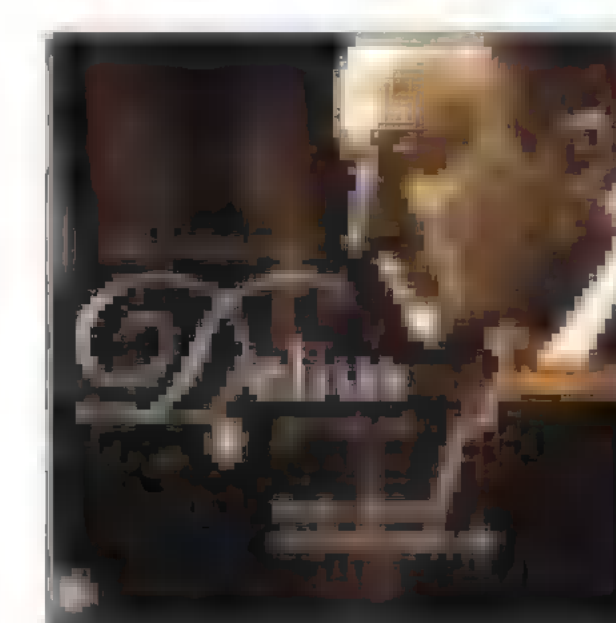
'The Complete Delius Songbook, Vol 1'

Seven Songs from the Norwegian. Four Old English Lyrics. Eleven Early Songs – No 1, Over the mountains high; No 4, Mountain Life. They are not long, the weeping and the laughter. Two Songs for Children – No 1, Little Birdie. Songs to Words by Various Poets – No 4, The nightingale has a lyre of gold; No 5, I-Brasil. Four Posthumous Songs – No 1, In the Forest; No 2, I once had a newly cut willow pipe. Three Shelley Songs.

Five Songs from the Norwegian

Mark Stone *bar* Stephen Barlow *pf*

Stone Records © 506019 2780062 (79' • DDD • T/I)



Opener for Delius song-cycles from Stone on his own label

The remarkable thing about this first volume of the collected Delius songs, quite apart from the quality of Mark Stone's singing, is that so few of them are identifiable as the work of Delius. That is the more surprising since most of them were inspired by Norway and one might have expected Grieg-like chords to point towards the mature Delius.

To one's surprise, the majority of the songs are relatively fast-moving with straightforward harmonic schemes. The results are always attractive, if not very Delian. The first group of seven Norwegian-inspired songs includes 'Twilight Fancies',



Modern strings, period style: Haydn from Holland

one of the best-known of all Delius songs, leading to two vigorous songs, one in triple-time, and an easily lyrical cradle song.

In the first English group, the setting of 'It was a lover and his lass' is fresh and straightforward, as is 'Spring, the sweet spring' to words by Thomas Nashe, later memorably set by Britten in his *Spring Symphony*. 'They are not long', to words by Ernest Dowson, is a setting with piano of what later became the final section of Delius's *Songs of Farewell*, and the dashing setting of Shelley's 'Love's Philosophy', though not as stirring as Roger Quilter's glorious setting, is also delightful, with a neat pay-off. The third Shelley song is also passionate in a way one might not expect of Delius.

The baritone Mark Stone has a remarkable voice, firm and finely focused, which he uses seductively over the widest dynamic and expressive range. His singing is ideally matched by the piano-playing of Stephen Barlow, the whole cleanly and clearly recorded, a credit to Stone Records. One looks forward to other volumes in the series. **Edward Greenfield**

Haydn

Die Schöpfung

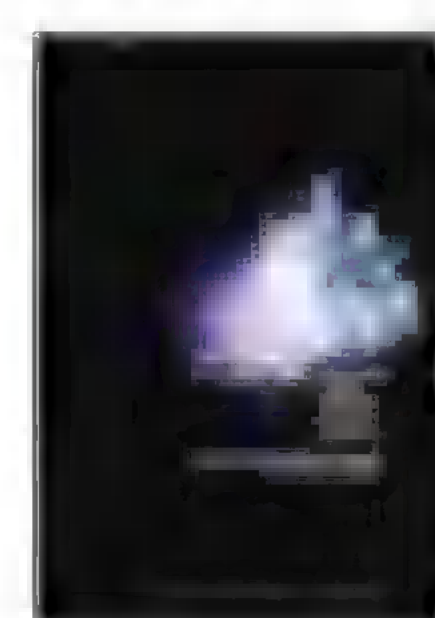
Lisa Milne, Lucy Crowe *sops* **Werner Güra** *ten* **Matthew Rose** *bar* **Jonathan Beyer** *bass* **Netherlands Radio Choir and Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra** / **John Nelson**

Video director **Rhodri Huw**

Idéale Audience International/Soli Deo Gloria Collection © **DVD** 307 9378 (142' + 40' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Grote Kerk, Naarden, Netherlands, June 2010

Extras include Rehearsal Footage with commentary by John Nelson



The Creation on DVD from Naarden's Gothic marvel

Filmed in the evocative setting of the Gothic Grote Kerk in Naarden, with its magnificent painted wooden vaults, this is an enjoyable if hardly revelatory *Creation*. Given a spirit of joyous enthusiasm, Haydn's great celebratory choruses never fail to refresh and uplift. Under John Nelson's energetic direction they certainly make their mark here, though he can sometimes push the music over-excitedly (the whipped-up closing stages of 'Die Himmel erzählen' – aka 'The Heavens are telling' – threaten to become a scramble), while contrapuntal clarity inevitably suffers in the church's vast acoustic. If the sopranos occasionally force at climaxes, the Netherlands Radio Choir sing with vigorous attack and a full, firm tone. Orchestral playing – modern instruments used with an awareness of period style – is alert, with some delectable woodwind work, not least from the first clarinet and a first flautist who seems to have captured the imagination of the camera crew.

Costs were evidently not a problem for the promoters, who engaged five soloists where Haydn invariably made do with three. Lisa Milne, as Gabriel, characterises eagerly and adds deft touches of ornamentation, though her high notes can sound strained. From his sepulchral opening, Matthew Rose sings with authority and impressive tonal depth. But I didn't detect much subtlety or humour. In the zoological extravaganza of Part 2, the creation of insects provokes a contemptuous sneer worthy of Osmin or Polyphemus, rather than a touch of amusement, as Haydn's music surely suggests.

Of the archangels, the palm goes to the Uriel of Werner Güra, mellifluous of tone and using the text with a Lieder singer's sensitivity. His ardent and (in the final section) tender 'Mit Würd' und Hoheit' ('In native worth') is a highlight. So, too, is the radiant, unfailingly graceful singing of Lucy Crowe as Eve. If Jonathan Beyer's personable Adam seems to warm more slowly than her to the prospect of marital bliss, both singers relish the Papageno-ish closing section of their love duet. Camerawork throughout is sensible and unfussy, closely attuned to what is going on in the music. Skippy documentation is only partly redeemed by the 'bonus' containing rehearsal clips and engaging, if slightly naive, commentary from John Nelson.

Richard Wigmore

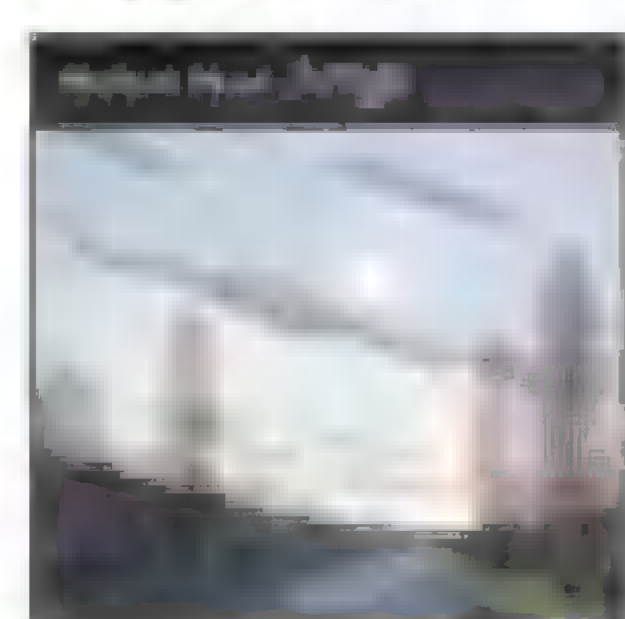
Head

Dear Delight^a. The Estuary^c. Foxgloves^a. The Garden Seat^b. A Green Cornfield^a. Had I a golden pound^a. Lean out of the window^c. Limehouse Reach^c. Love's Lament^b. The Little Road to Bethlehem^b. Money, O!^c. My Sword for the King^c. Oh, for a March wind^a. October Valley^b. Over the Rim of the Moon^a. A Piper^b. Star Candles^a. Three Songs of Venice^b. Sweet chance, that led my steps abroad^a. Tewkesbury Road^c. The Viper^c. You cannot dream things lovelier^c

^aAilish Tynan *sop* ^bCatherine Wyn-Rogers *mez*

^cRoderick Williams *bar* Christopher Glynn *pf*

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67899 (77 • DDD • T)



Songs from the RAM's
sometime piano professor

Really, the enterprise of Hyperion knows no bounds. Here is a disc devoted to songs by Michael Head, who is not likely to be known to many. Head was born in 1900: he studied at the Royal Academy of Music, where his friends included the composer Alan Bush. He taught the piano at the Academy from 1927 until his retirement in 1975; he died the following year in South Africa, while examining for the Associated Board. During the war he studied with Bush, who had married his sister.

As well as teaching and examining, Head was an adjudicator and broadcaster; and he also had a career as a singer, accompanying himself on the piano. The earliest of the 27 songs here dates from 1918; the latest, *Three Songs of Venice*, to words by Nancy Bush, were first performed posthumously. In an excellent booklet-note – what a relief to find his essay following the disc's order of the songs – Andrew Burn suggests a kinship with Roger Quilter. On the evidence here, I'd say Head lacked Quilter's gift of melody: there's much that is finely wrought but little that is memorable. Sometimes, as in the second verse of 'Money, O!', Head surprises you with an asymmetrical phrase; more conventionally, he often repeats the first verse at the end.

Singers and pianist perform with conviction and style. If you can, start with 'Limehouse Reach', which has the charm and simplicity of Vaughan Williams's 'Linden Lea', and take it from there. **Richard Lawrence**

Holst

Two Psalms, H117. Nunc dimittis, H127. I love my love, H136. The Coming of Christ, H170^a

^aRobert Hardy *narr* Chamber Choir of St Paul's Girls' School; City of London Choir; The Holst Orchestra / Hilary Davan Wetton

EM Records Ⓢ EMRCD004 (57 • DDD)



Forces from Holst's old school
in his 'mystery play' music

The real rarity here is *The Coming of Christ*. This is a play by John Masefield, commissioned by George Bell, the Dean of Canterbury, as a modern equivalent to the mystery plays of the Middle Ages. Holst composed the incidental music: seven choral pieces lasting some 20 minutes. The first performance took place at Whitsun 1928 in Canterbury Cathedral. Holst took along pupils from St Paul's Girls' School and Morley College as participants; how appropriate that the former's Chamber Choir is to be heard on this disc.

The music is straightforward, with much unison writing. It begins and ends with a trumpet fanfare; the accompaniment includes parts for piano and chimes. The opening number, the 'First Song of the Host of Heaven', is a choral recitative: first in unison over a pedal point, then *a cappella* in harmony. Hilary Davan Wetton shapes it sensitively. Later, in 'The Antiphonal', the sopranos and the trumpet are out of step; as it happens twice, perhaps it's deliberate.

Between the choral pieces comes a reduced version of Masefield's play, with Robert Hardy taking all the parts. He sounds overwrought and actorish in places, and his assumption of rustic accents for the three shepherds is not a success, but his diction is certainly clear.

The first of the Two Psalms, for chorus, strings and organ, is rather let down by a weedy tenor solo; the second fares better, with its pealing Alleluias. The unaccompanied *Nunc dimittis* and *I love my love* are just fine.

Richard Lawrence

Høybye

Cantate Domino. Deep Down in the Ocean. Haec dies. Jubilate Deo. The Magic Paint Brush. Magnificat. Marts-sol. Nunc dimittis. The Sea Witch. Skoven er så underfuld. Stand up my dear Voces Nordicae / Lone Larsen

Footprint Ⓢ FRCD062 (49 • DDD • T)



Sacred and secular works
from Copenhagen composer

John Høybye (b1939) is one of those composers one hears about but rarely hears, so this spotlight on his work is very welcome. The track-listing implies 11 separate pieces here but in fact there are six, as *Cantate Domino*, *Haec dies* and *Jubilate Deo* form a set of three motets (*Three Bright Motets in Stereo*), *Deep Down in the Ocean*, *The Sea Witch* and *Stand up my dear* are extracted from Høybye's cantata *The Little Mermaid* and the final two Danish-language songs (the only ones not in English) form a self-contained diptych. Arguably, the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* ('Song of Simeon', not 'Simon' as the booklet suggests) could be considered another.

Høybye's intimate understanding of what works chorally and what does not is obvious in every bar and these unaccompanied pieces sound grateful to sing but also challenging enough. However, there is a lack of drama in almost all the works that I find rather unsatisfying. The opening cantata, *The Magic Paint Brush* (neither the disc nor the composer's website, www.hoymusik.dk, provides any dates), is finely imagined, based on an old Chinese folk-tale; but at the climax, when the paintbrush is used to draw a wave that sinks a shipful of people, the effect is anodyne. (How might, say, Judith Weir, have treated the subject?) Likewise, the depiction of Hans Christian Andersen's Sea Witch (Disney, frankly, is more atmospheric). The Latin motets are indeed Bright and in Stereo but unremarkable, as are the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*. The folk settings show Høybye at his best and the performances from the excellent Voces Nordicae are first-rate. Footprint's sound is fine, too.

Guy Rickards

MacMillan



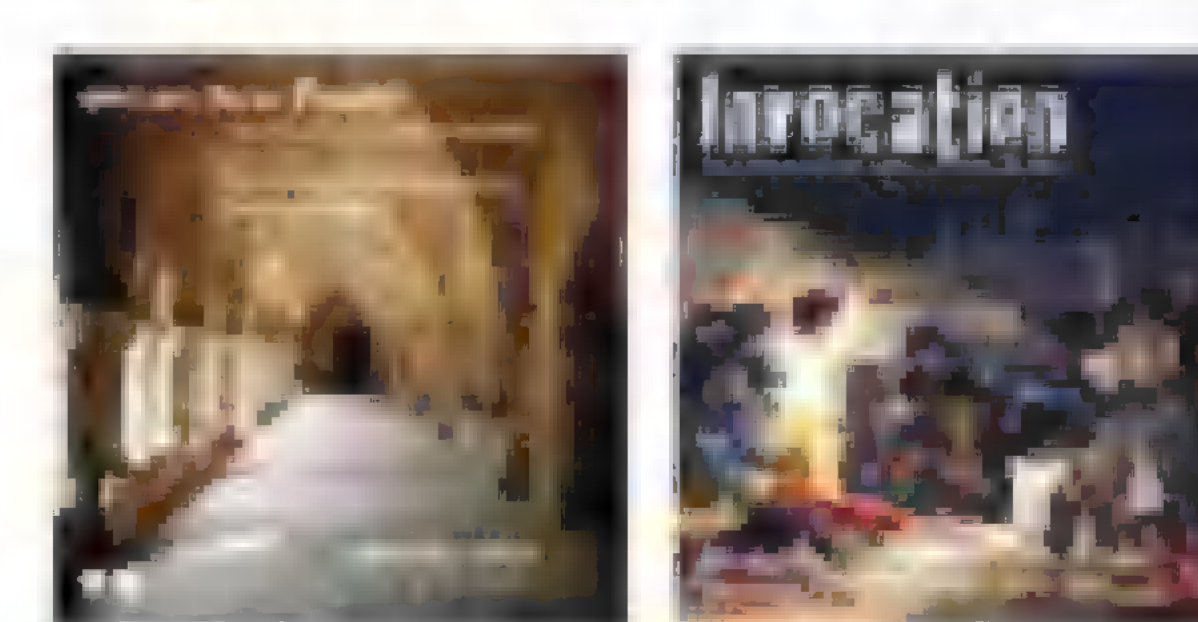
'Who are these Angels?'

And lo, the Angel of the Lord. Strathclyde Motets II. Bring us, O Lord. Benedictus Deus. Advent Antiphon. Who are these Angels? Think of how God loves you. Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman Cappella Nova / Alan Tavener with Cauty / William Taylor *hp* John Kitchen *org* Edinburgh Quartet Linn Ⓢ CKD383 (72 • DDD • T/t)

Leighton • MacMillan

'Invocation'

Leighton God's Grandeur. Missa Sancti Thomae. Quam dilecta! MacMillan Laudi alla Vergine Maria. The Song of the Lamb. Invocation. Cantos Sagrados Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir / Paul Spicer with David Saint *org* Regent Ⓢ REGCD348 (75 • DDD • T/t)



Teacher and pupil meet with world premiere recordings from Birmingham James MacMillan would seem to be delving further and further into his Catholic roots; not so much a regression as a self-exploration. He is rapidly furnishing the sacred choral repertory with music which continues the long tradition of setting sacred texts in a musical language which is restrained, refined and deeply beautiful. Nothing revolutionary or cutting-edge here; just well-crafted music, highly accessible and designed to illuminate rather than obscure the texts. Two separate discs explore different aspects of MacMillan's choral output, both containing material which is new to disc. Most impressive, from a



Lone's rangers: Swedish ensemble Voces Nordicae sing Høybye

performance standpoint, is Cappella Nova, a Scottish-based group founded in 1982 by Alan and Rebecca Tavener. Their previous disc of MacMillan (Linn, 1/08) included the first set of *Strathclyde Motets* originally written for liturgical use by the University of Strathclyde Chamber Choir. Here they introduce us to the second set, which MacMillan composed between 2007 and 2010 (we are told this is the 'final' set: we shall see).

As on their previous disc, Cappella Nova present illuminating performances which perfectly capture MacMillan's profound sense of the sacred, but here the sense of looking back over the centuries is especially strong. It is particularly vivid in *Os mutorum*, which is performed here by traditional harpist, William Taylor, and the four voices of Canty, who bill themselves as Scotland's only professional Medieval music group (three of its four singers, it should be said, appear in the vocal line-up of Cappella Nova).

The Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir's disc has less a sense of looking back as of being part of a living evolution of sacred music. They mix their MacMillan selection with music by Kenneth Leighton and their assertive, slightly harsh tone is certainly well suited to Leighton's chromatic idiom, not least in a finely honed account of the *Missa Sancti Thomae*. It also brings a potent sense of anguish to the powerful three-section *Cantos Sagrados*, an expression of what MacMillan admits to be his 'interest in liberation theology'. In terms of repertory and performance, these two discs are entirely complementary and are essential additions to the rapidly growing discography of one of Britain's most self-assured musical voices.

Marc Rochester

A Mahler • G Mahler

A Mahler *Die stille Stadt. In meines Vaters Garten. Laue Sommernacht. Bei dir ist es traut. Ich wandle unter Blumen* **G Mahler** *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (orch Schoenberg). *Kindertotenlieder* (orch de Leeuw)

Julie Boulianne *mez*

Ensemble Orford / Jean-François Rivest

ATMA Classique © ACD2 2665 (56' • DDD • T/D)



Canadian mezzo Boulianne with songs by both Mahlers

Last year was a big one for the Canadian mezzo Julie Boulianne. Coinciding with her debut at the Met in New York, she signed a deal to record with ATMA Classique, the label trumpeting the present disc as her first solo effort. Regular readers of *Gramophone* could be forgiven for raising an eyebrow at that, recalling some well-received Ravel from Nashville (Naxos, 6/09). As the late Patrick O'Connor observed of her title-role in *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, her timbre is not exactly childlike, but few such accomplished exponents of Rossini are able to summon up the plaintive contralto-ish sonority to create the right atmosphere for Mahler.

That Boulianne can project the pervasive feeling of sadness without excessive weight is partly a factor of the 'domestic' arrangements employed. The reduction of *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* is credited to Schoenberg, whose part in the exercise may or may not have gone beyond hurriedly marking a score. While Reinbert de Leeuw's pocket *Kindertotenlieder* dates from 1991, it too is conceived in the spirit of Schoenberg's Society for Private Musical Performances, where radical scores were explored for sympathetic listeners, critics not welcome.

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• Neven on sea

'I long to hear more of him,' said our critic Edward Greenfield of Dutch baritone Henk Neven, reviewing his disc of *Lieder* by Carl Loewe (7/11). Soon we will: Neven was back at Potton Hall as we went to press, exploring French and Austrian song inspired by the sea. Hans Eijssackers was his pianist again, and Onyx will release the disc in November.

• Jubilee coronation

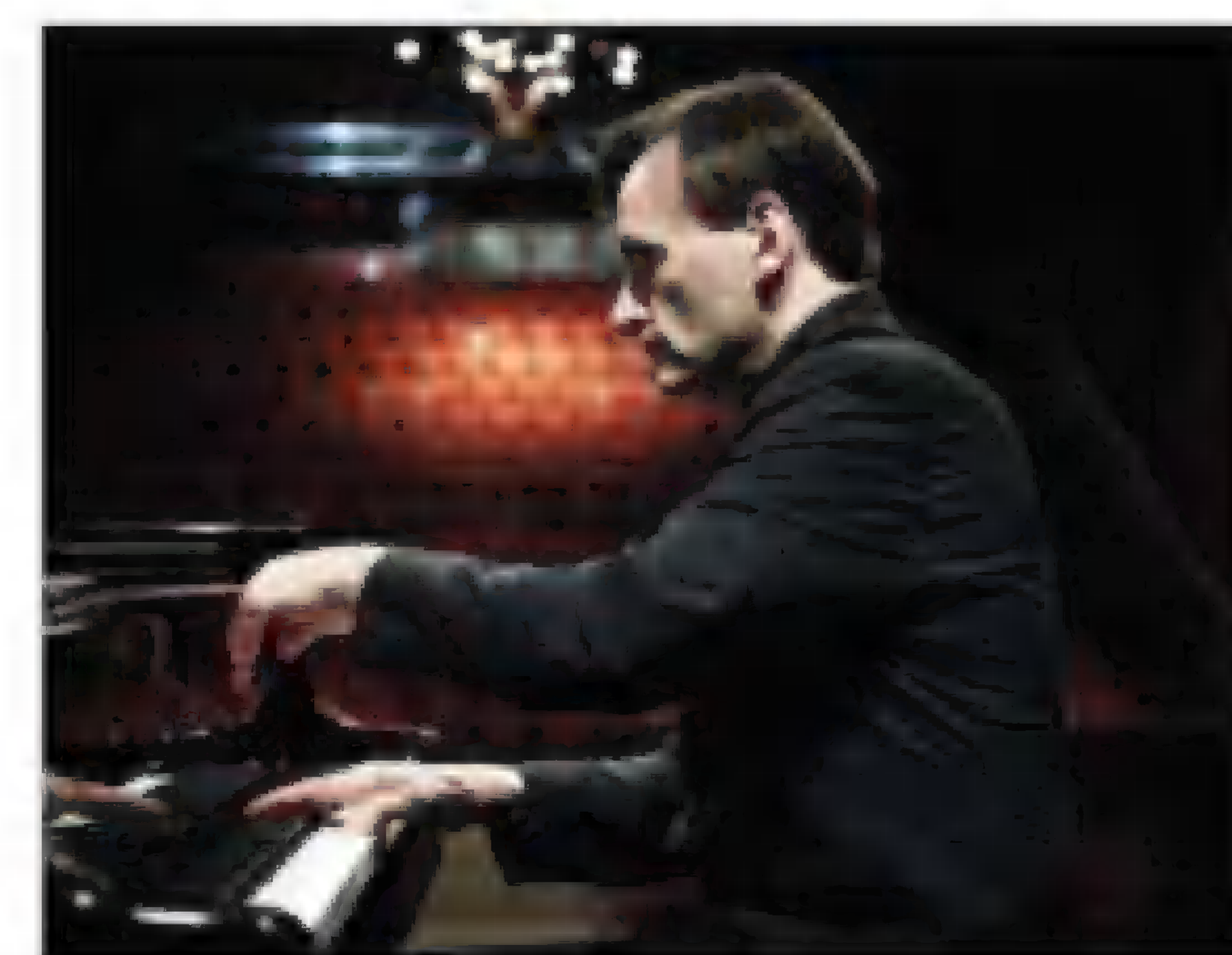
The Gabrieli Consort and Players will assemble at Douai Abbey in Berkshire in late February to re-record music by their namesake composer. 'A Venetian Coronation' is a remake of their *Gramophone* Award-winning 1989 album, refreshed for the composer's 400th anniversary and the Queen's jubilee, and released soon on Paul McCreesh's own label, Winged Lion.

• More Suk from Bělohlávek

Following their recording of Josef Suk's gargantuan orchestral tapestry *The Ripening*, Jiri Bělohlávek and the BBC Symphony Orchestra were back at the Watford Colosseum in January to record the same composer's *A Summer's Tale* and symphonic poem *Praga*. The Chandos partnership of Brian Pidgeon and Ralph Couzens caught it for their company's microphones and a future release.

• St John's 'chapel royal'

Also for Chandos, the choir of St John's College, Cambridge, recorded Chapel Royal anthems by Henry Purcell in January. But of particular interest are the disc's 'fillers', the E flat Evening Canticles and an anthem by Pelham Humfrey, the idiosyncratic English composer who absorbed elements of French style while on government business across the channel.



• Rachmaninov Hough

Producer Phil Rowlands tweeted on January 12 that he'd just recorded a 'lovely' performance of Rachmaninov's First Piano Concerto with Stephen Hough (above) and the CBSO conducted by Andris Nelsons. No label has publicised the release but we suspect it will appear on Orfeo.

The expert accompanists are well caught albeit with the singer rather closely observed out front. My one real gripe is with the inadequate gap left before the bonus items, five songs by Alma in their original voice-and-piano format. How good are they? The booklet-note explains how in a bid to save his marriage Gustav sponsored their publication after earlier nipping his wife's compositional aspirations in the bud. Her refined literary taste is more apparent than a truly individual voice but, having received a bad press in recent years, she may deserve reassessment. Whatever your take on that, one of today's most promising singers is notably well served. Full texts and translations are provided, not always the case these days. **David Gutman**

Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen (arr Schoenberg) –

selected comparison:

Bär, Linos Ens (3/02) (CAPR) CAP10 863

Mahler • Pfitzner • R Strauss

'Stimme der Sehnsucht'

Mahler Kindertotenlieder **Pfitzner** Fünf Lieder – No 2, Nachtwanderer; No 4, Lockung, Abschied, Op 9 No 5. Stimme der Sehnsucht, Op 19 No 1. Nachts, Op 26 No 2 **R Strauss** Zueignung, Op 10 No 1. Ständchen, Op 17 No 2. All mein' Gedanken, Op 21 No 1. Morgen!, Op 27 No 4. Nachtgang, Op 29 No 3. Befreit, Op 39 No 4. Des Dichters Abendgang, Op 47 No 2. Schlechtes Wetter, Op 69 No 5

Christianne Stotijn *mez* **Joseph Breinl** *pf*

Onyx (M) ONYX4075 (61' • DDD • T/t)



Stotijn's 'voice of longing' in post-Romantic Lieder

Only minutes into my first recital encounter with Christianne Stotijn (Berg, Schubert and Wolf, 6/06), her Lieder credentials were secure. Here was a singer whose voice and intelligence melded seamlessly with words, vocal line and whatever dramatic concept was at hand. That impression only intensifies – as her vocal colours grow richer – in 'Stimme der Sehnsucht', a programme of Pfitzner, Strauss and Mahler Lieder sung not just with her customary mastery but always with something significant to discover with each listening, even in less memorable Pfitzner songs. As easily as one might fall into lazy listening with the better-known songs such as 'Zueignung' and 'Morgen!', Stotijn's vivid performances make you examine the texts anew just to appreciate her sudden burst of vocal colour ('Zueignung' goes into the Jessye Norman zone) or her onomatopoeic effects, which give the characters within the songs a near-physical presence.

Less exalted moments can be oddly notable as well: Strauss's quirky 'Schlechtes Wetter', a slice of life about women enduring bad weather for the sake of mundane household

tasks, has humour but no punchline and satire without a clear judgement. Amid that ambiguity, the Stotijn/Breinl version goes to places that the composer's own recording doesn't fathom, with the pianist finding a clumsy bourgeois waltz in one verse and Stotijn treating the vocal line with a recklessness that reminds you not to take anything literally.

The soul of the disc is Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* in one of the more convincing piano-accompanied performances, partly for the way pianist Joseph Breinl explores fine points of harmonic characterisation that are lost amid washes of sound in the more frequently heard orchestral version. Interpretatively, Stotijn turns the songs into repeated attempts to find the comfort of normality amid a tragedy whose impact won't relent. The final song confronts the worst guilt of all – a mother allowing their children out into a storm and then denying that she did so. Yet this particularly wrenching version of *Kindertotenlieder* comes with a resolution that the listeners need even though Mahler didn't provide one. Stotijn follows Mahler with Strauss's 'Morgen!', a song that can mean many things but is sequenced here to be a vision of meeting loved ones in the afterlife – yet another reason why Stotijn is God's gift to Christa Ludwig admirers. **David Patrick Stearns**

Mealor

'A Tender Light'

Now sleeps the crimson petal. She walks in beauty. O vos omnes. Stabat mater^a. Salvator mundi: Greater Love. Locus iste. Ave Maria. Ubi caritas

^a**Grace Davidson** *sop* **Tenebrae**; ^b**Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** / **Nigel Short**

Decca (P) 278 1149 (70' • DDD)



Tenebrae and the RPO for Royal Wedding composer

Paul Mealor's stock as a composer increased beyond all expectation after the performance of his achingly beautiful *Ubi caritas* at the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton in April 2011. Not many thirty-something composers can claim to have been heard by 2.5 billion people. But one swallow does not a summer make, and the true test of Mealor's creative prowess will be judged against his ability to sustain such lyrical and transcendent serenity over the course of an entire recording.

All the signs on 'A Tender Light' suggest that Mealor has more than met the challenge here. This is certainly not a recording of *Ubi caritas* spin-offs. Indeed, if there is a spin-off then it is *Ubi caritas* itself, which is a re-setting of the more effective 'Now sleeps the crimson petal' (Tennyson's poem was considered too

risqué for the Royal occasion). The latter is part of a luminous cycle of rose-related texts, which opens the recording. The other 'cycle', Mealor's setting of the *Stabat mater*, is in many respects the highlight here. Soprano Grace Davidson imbues the melodic line with a wonderfully sustained quality in the second section and the highly impressive *Tenebrae* directed by Nigel Short pull out all the vocal stops at the right moments.

While the stormy outbursts of earlier works such as the Piano Trio have been eschewed for far calmer waters, there is still plenty of dramatic contrast and dynamic control in 'A Tender Light', such as in the tintinnabular-inspired *O vos omnes*. Mealor has finally found his true compositional voice here – one that manages to avoid the mawkishness of much that characterises recent tonally imbued choral music. It all suggests that his stock will indeed continue to rise. **Pwyll ap Sion**

O'Regan

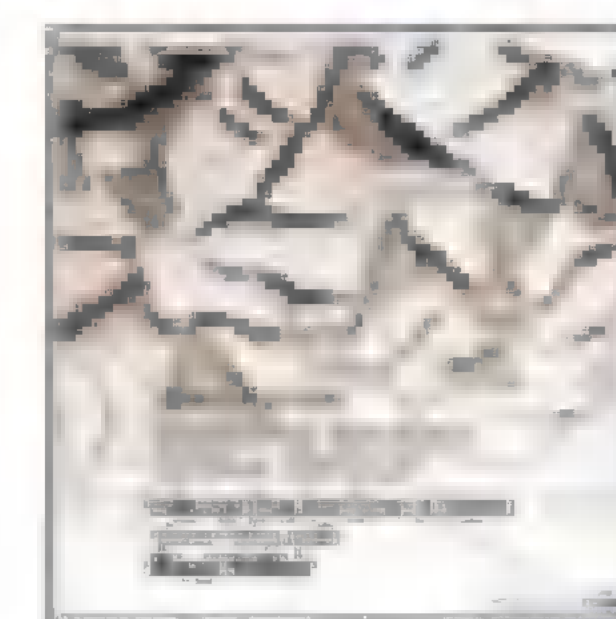
Acallam na Senórach – An Irish Colloquy

Stewart French *gtr*

National Chamber Choir of Ireland / **Paul Hillier**

Harmonia Mundi (P) HMU80 7486

(63' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



English composer's Irish epic for the choir's label debut

English composer Tarik O'Regan has collected a large and enthusiastic following among choirs on both sides of the Atlantic. As well he might. His music is both accessible and original, maintaining interest by never quite settling into one clearly defined idiom. There are bits of American minimalism and contemporary rock alongside glimpses of ancient chant, folk melody and the English choral tradition. Thus far he has confined himself to relatively short pieces, some of which might be accused of placing beauty of sound above musical substance, but with this, his first really substantial score, O'Regan reveals that he is capable of sustaining interest over what amounts to a 60-minute time frame.

Acallam na Senórach (roughly translated the Gaelic title means 'Dialogue of the Elders') sets a medieval Irish epic using both English and Middle Irish words, accompanied by some florid classical guitar-playing from Stewart French and traditional Irish drumming from Jim Higgins and Frank Torpey. The music avoids cliché yet still evokes a palpable sense of ancient history and obscure rites.

O'Regan achieves this through considerable economy of means. Beyond the two basic instrumental colours, the musical argument is conveyed through a 16-voice chamber choir,



Paul Hillier conducts the National Chamber Choir of Ireland on their Harmonia Mundi debut

with only occasional voices emerging in brief solos. It is a highly effective and, in places, inspired piece, beautifully delivered by Paul Hillier and the National Chamber Choir of Ireland, and cleanly captured in this fine Harmonia Mundi recording. **Marc Rochester**

Schubert

Schwanengesang, D957.

Herbst, D945. Der Winterabend, D938

Christopher Maltman bar **Graham Johnson** pf

Wigmore Hall Live (M) WHLIVE0049 (63' • DDD • T/I)

Recorded live, April 2010



Maltman completes his Wigmore Schubert cycle

With this disc, Christopher Maltman and Graham Johnson complete their trio of Schubert song-cycles from the Wigmore Hall. Actually, *Schwanengesang* is not a song-cycle; nor is it a swansong, but perhaps there's no point in being pedantic about that. The songs are performed in the published order. Maltman brings a light touch to 'Liebesbotschaft', beautifully complemented by the filigree of Johnson's accompaniment. In 'Kriegers Ahnung' there's a noticeable beat to the sustained high E flat on 'heiss', temporarily effaced in the memory by the powerful *crescendo* that follows. Maltman catches the restlessness of 'Frühlingssehnsucht' very well, but restless turns into relentless, almost perfunctory, in 'Ständchen': deliberately, no doubt, but I found the song unmoving.

'Aufenthalt' goes much better. The

compass covers nearly two octaves: Maltman darkens his tone for the repeated low notes at the beginning before opening up where the poet compares his tears to the waves. The last of the Rellstab settings, 'Abschied' – a farewell to the town, the girls, and one girl in particular – is a strange and rather appealing dichotomy. Johnson's piano perfectly represents the 'little horse' trotting along but Maltman strikes a different note, thoughtful rather than exuberant.

Rellstab is followed by Heine. Maltman lacks the ideal weight for 'Der Atlas' but the major-key phrases of 'Ihr Bild' are poignant indeed. 'Der Doppelgänger', surely the greatest of the set, is properly gripping at first; but Maltman speeds up when the poet addresses his ghostly double, which diminishes the effect. The second encore, 'Der Winterabend', culminates in Johnson's right hand doubling and counterpointing the vocal line – magical. **Richard Lawrence**

Schubert

Winterreise, D911

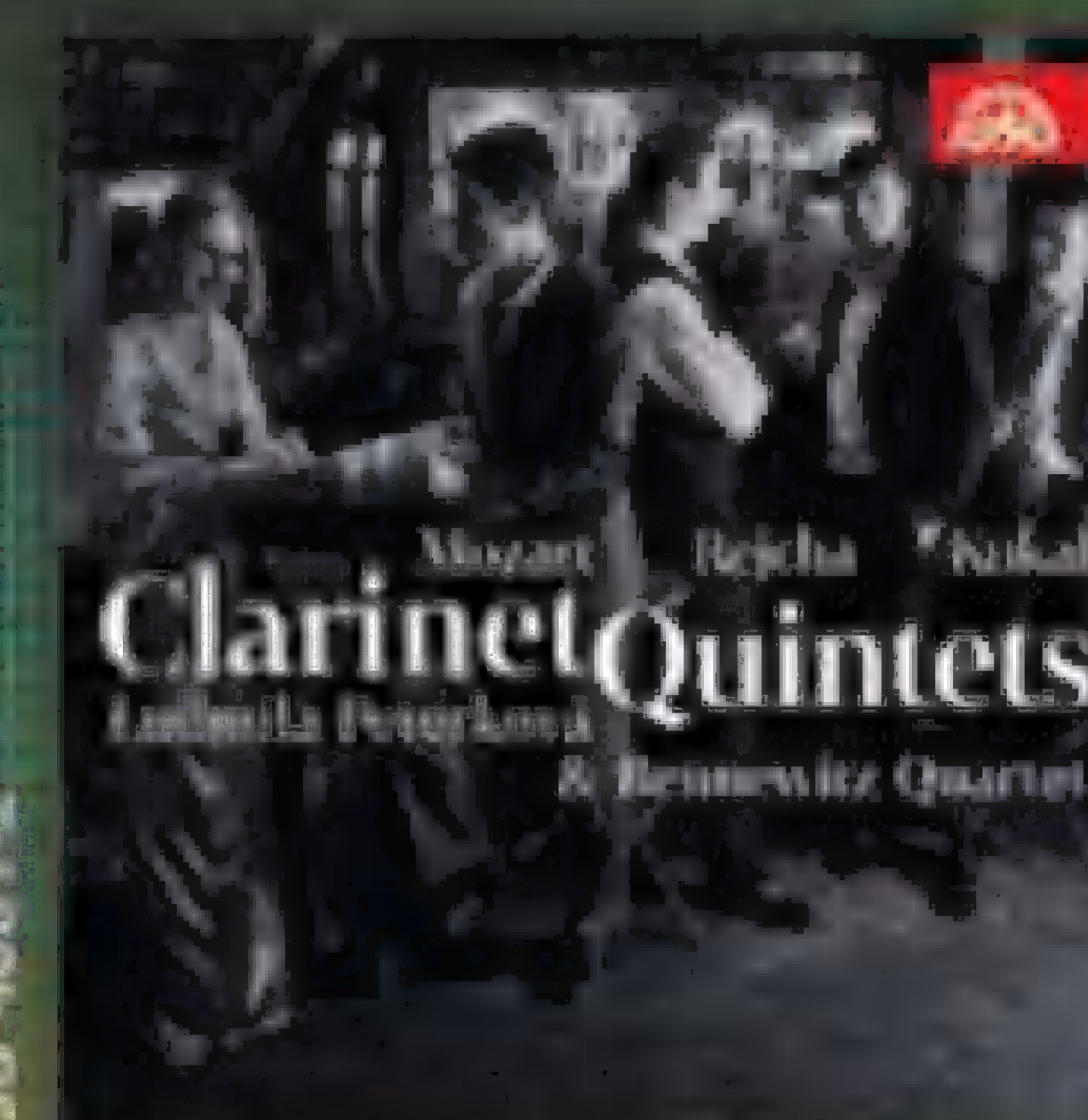
Florian Boesch bar **Malcolm Martineau** pf

Onyx (M) ONYX4077 (77' • DDD • T/I)



Boesch and Martineau in a Finchley-taped Winterreise

Schubert himself recognised that his song-cycle *Die Winterreise* was special, urging a friend, Josef von Spaun, 'Come to Schober's today. I shall sing you a cycle of songs and I am curious to know what you will all say to them. They have taken more out of me than



SU 4061-2

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Clarinet Quintets
Mozart, Rejcha, Kukul



SU 4068-2

Music from Eighteenth-Century Prague
Jan Dismas Zelenka / Sepolcri
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was ever the case with my other songs.' How right he was, for when sensitively recreated, they are moving in a very special way. They have been much recorded, but this new version by Florian Boesch and Malcolm Martineau is inspired and quite unforgettable. It has total spontaneity, a superbly balanced, totally natural recording, with the pianist making a perfect partnership with the singer.

The very first song, 'Die Nacht', arrests the attention as it should, and one is utterly melted by the lovely 'Der Lindenbaum', while the pianist, Malcolm Martineau, is equally compelling as he begins 'Wasserflut' with great delicacy, matched by Boesch. Similarly, the gently pointed opening of 'Auf dem Flusse' is tellingly contrasted with the energy of 'Rückblick'. The weariness of 'Rast' is no less hauntingly conveyed, while 'Frühlingstraum' opens brightly and then slips imperceptibly into sad nostalgia, which persists in 'Einsamkeit' and makes the contrasts of 'Die Post' and 'Die Krähe' even more effective.

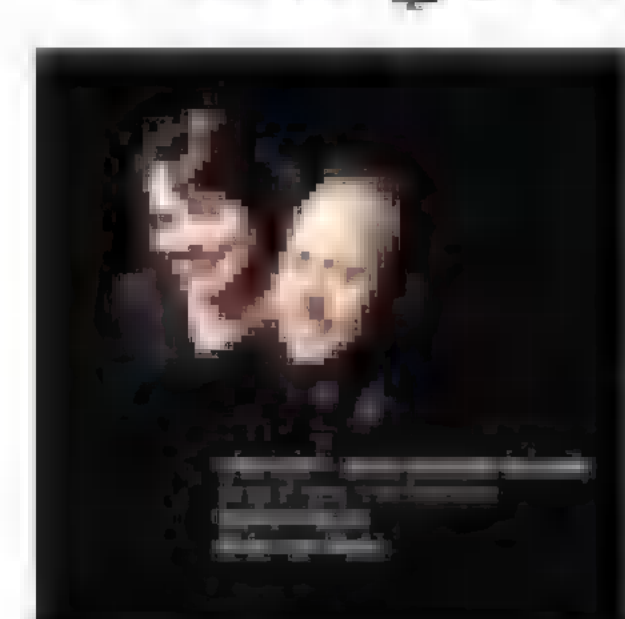
What is remarkable in a performance of this calibre is that the sadness which permeates nearly all these songs (and particularly 'Das Wirtshaus', with its anticipation of death) is always affecting, yet never depressing for the listener, while 'Mut!' lifts the spirits before the final gentle resignation of 'Die Nebensonnen' makes way for the extraordinary, unpredictable postlude, 'Der Leiermann'. The poetic imagery is magically sung, and Martineau perfectly captures the drone of the hurdy-gurdy, played here on a restrained half-tone to end a performance to which I shall return again and again. I cannot recommend this CD too highly.

Ivan March

C Scott • Vaughan Williams

'Songs of Quest and Inspiration'

C Scott Ballad of Fair Helen of Kirkconnel, Op 8. Blackbird's Song, Op 52 No 3. An Eastern Lament, Op 62 No 3. Have ye seen him pass by?. The Huckster. Picnic, Op 46 No 3. Prelude, Op 57 No 1. Song of London, Op 52 No 1. A Song of Wine, Op 46 No 3. Sundown. Time O' Day. To-Morrow. Water-Lilies **Vaughan Williams** Five Mystical Songs – Love bade me welcome; Easter. Songs of Travel **Robbert Muuse** bar **Micha van Weers** pf Challenge Classics © CC72527 (65' • DDD)



Dutch examination of the mostly pre-war Cyril Scott

The music of Cyril Scott has enjoyed something of a renaissance in recent times. Between them Chandos, Dutton and Marco Polo have recorded a range of his orchestral, chamber and piano works. This has subsequently allowed us properly to

judge the nature and quality of his music, rather than by only a few miniatures such as the *Water Wagtail* and *Danse nègre* which shored up his declining reputation after the Second World War.

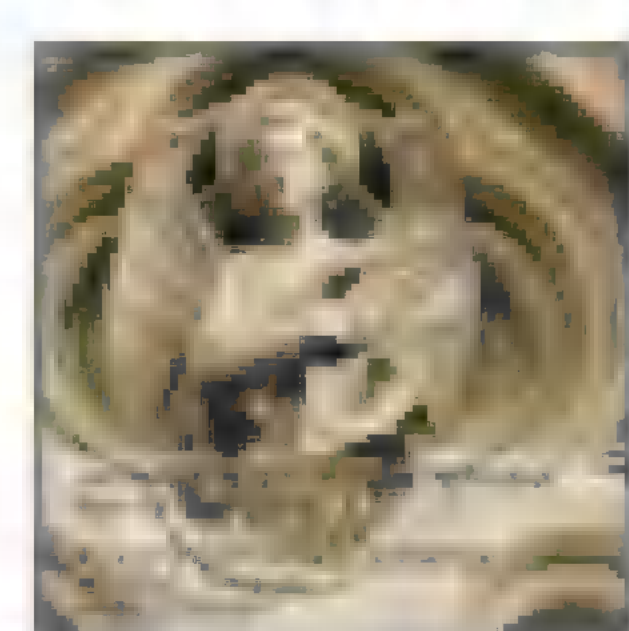
This pioneering recording, by the enterprising Dutch pair Robbert Muuse and Micha van Weers, of a selection of Scott's songs, many of them world premieres, provides an enlightening glimpse of the composer's appreciable powers, not least during the period before the First World War when he was considered, like Bantock, to be one of Britain's *enfants terribles* in the musical world. Debussy admired Scott's work and the influence of the Frenchman is evident in much of the harmonic colour and piano texture, especially in imaginative pieces such as 'Picnic', the brusque 'Song of London' (both 1906) and 'An Eastern Lament' (1909). Muuse consciously attempts to emphasise the heady, languorous atmosphere of 'A Song of Wine' (1907), whose French credentials are even more exaggerated in the post-war 'Have ye seen him pass by?' and 'The Huckster' (both 1921), and the fine setting of Christina Rossetti's 'To-Morrow' (1927). Muuse and van Weers also give impressive performances of Vaughan Williams's *Songs of Travel* and two of the *Five Mystical Songs* (though I miss the presence of the accompanying chorus).

Jeremy Dibble

Choir of St John's College, Cambridge

Bernstein Chichester Psalms^a **Grandjany** Aria in Classical Style **Janáček** Otčenáš^b **Mathias** Improvisations **Britten** A Ceremony of Carols **Choir of St John's College, Cambridge** / **Andrew Nethsingha** with ^b**Justin Lavender** ten **Frances Kelly** hp **Léon Charles** org ^a**Cameron Sinclair** perc

St John's College Records © SJCR105-2 (71' • DDD)



Choral arrangements on St John's choir's own label

A very interesting programme of choral and instrumental pieces. It's always good to hear Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, and Julius Harrison's superb SATB arrangement of Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* is totally convincing. Janáček's setting of The Lord's Prayer is a work of beautiful solemnity and the two instrumental items are intensely atmospheric – Baroque-like majesty in the Grandjany and glittering kaleidoscopic harp timbres in the Mathias.

The polished sound of the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge (including some very accomplished treble soloists) under the meticulous direction of Andrew Nethsingha could be described as 'urbane'. Their carefully crafted singing is well suited

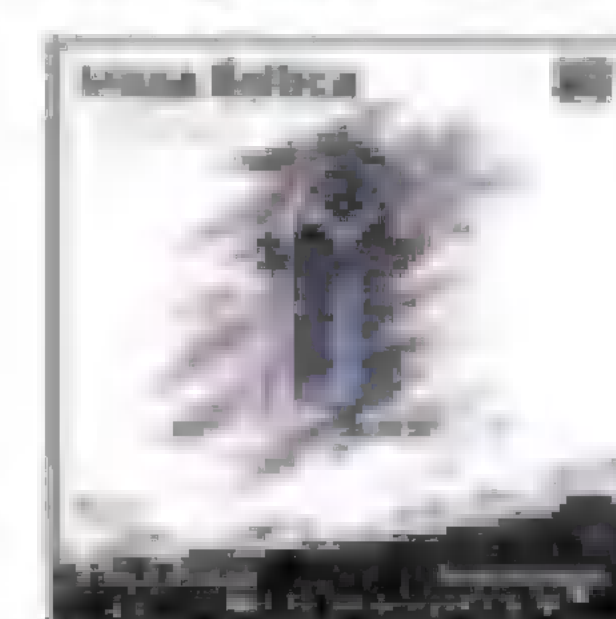
to liturgical repertoire but just occasionally feels less appropriate in Bernstein's *Psalms*. Although tempi and dynamic markings are faithfully observed, this performance, while perfectly acceptable, lacks the final degree of flair and drama. The distant recorded sound of the organ doesn't help and fails to do justice either to Bernstein's colourful writing or Léon Charles's excellent playing.

The compositions by Britten and Janáček are marginally more successful, the latter considerably enhanced by the rich, vibrant singing of Justin Lavender. Frances Kelly's contribution as both accompanist and soloist is truly wonderful – this CD is worth buying to hear harp-playing at its very finest. It's also worth getting for the opportunity to hear the less familiar items by Grandjany, Janáček and Mathias, plus the SATB version of *A Ceremony of Carols*, which deserves to be better known and more frequently performed. **Christopher Nickol**

'Missa Baltica'

'Sacred Choral Music Around the Baltic Sea'

Górecki Amen **Heiniö** Luceat **Kokkonen** Laudatio Domini **Lidholm** De profundis **Pärt** Nunc dimittis **Penderecki** Song of Cherubim **Rautavaara** Herran rukous **J Sandström** Gloria **S-D Sandström/Purcell** Hear my prayer, O Lord **Stravinsky** Credo **Key Ensemble** / **Teemu Honkanen** Fuga © FUGA9302 (69' • DDD)



Young Finnish choir on a Helsinki CD store's own label

The Key Ensemble is a new chamber choir, formed in Finland as recently as 2005, yet is a group of some considerable polish and attainment, judging from this finely sung programme under their founding conductor, Teemu Honkanen. Numbering 28 members (according to the list of personnel in the booklet), the choir is well balanced and well drilled, secure in intonation (if a touch hard-edged in tone) and their diction – as can be judged by this enterprising collection – is first-rate.

I have to confess that I assumed from the title alone that this was a recording of some anonymous medieval or Renaissance Mass setting. Instead, the disc is a collection of sacred pieces from five Baltic countries (Denmark, Germany, Latvia and Lithuania are omitted) sequenced to resemble a Mass at times. So Sven-David Sandström's reworking of Purcell's *Hear my prayer*, *O Lord* serves as a vigorous 'introit' and Lidholm's grippingly austere *De profundis* (extracted from his opera *A Dream-Spell*) a grave 'Kyrie'. Jan Sandström's *Gloria* and Stravinsky's *Credo* fill self-explanatory roles but the latter's brevity is at odds with the concept which, thereafter, is only loosely



Stephen Layton, Michala Petri and the Danish National Vocal Ensemble at the Christianskirken in Copenhagen

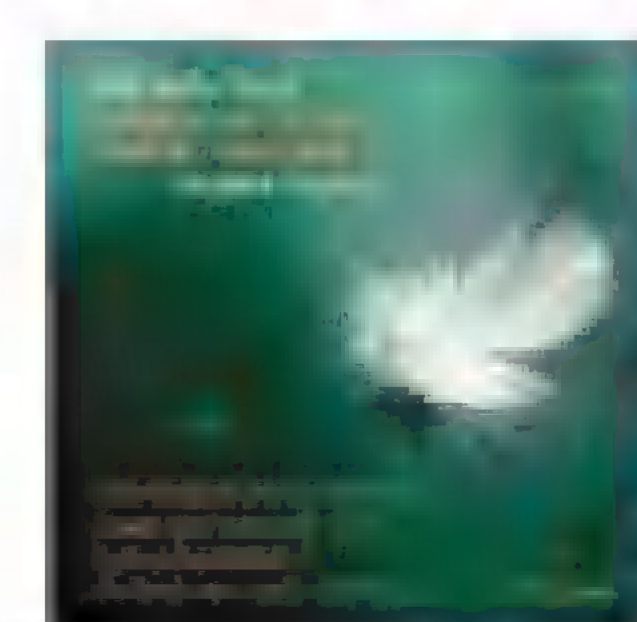
followed until Górecki's dismally static closing *Amen*.

The high points are mainly in the latter half, however, starting with Kokkonen's marvellous five-span *Laudatio Domini*, a real modern classic. Mikko Heiniö's *Luceat* receives its first recording here and is the real climax of the disc, not the Górecki. We should have more Heiniö on disc. Penderecki's *Song of Cherubim* is a well-constructed motet and weightier than Pärt's over-long *Nunc dimittis*; both are overshadowed by Rautavaara's superbly brief setting of the Lord's Prayer. Fuga's sound is first-rate. **Guy Rickards**

'The Nightingale'

Börtz *Nemesis divina* **Bruun** *Two Scenes with Skylark* **Praulins** *The Nightingale* **Rasmussen** 'I' **Michala Petri** *recs*

Danish National Vocal Ensemble / Stephen Layton
OUR Recordings © 6 220605 (59' • DDD • T)



Layton in Denmark for another Baltic voyage

This new disc reinforces the extraordinary strengths of the Danish choral tradition. Here are voices of mature suppleness and agility, surveying new music by a Nordic quartet of a Dane, a Latvian, a Swede and a Faroese, stirring from a deep wellspring of creativity and all sung in English. The oldest piece

recorded here (a mere four years old) is *Nemesis divina* by Daniel Börtz, born in Sweden in 1943. This is a challenging 'musical/metaphysical meditation' on the word 'man', reminiscent of 1970s Berio but none the worse for it. Rasmussen's 'I' is equally challenging on first hearing, full of twists and turns.

The Nightingale (2011) by the Latvian Uģis Praulins is essentially a 30-minute concerto, consisting of a series of eight colourful tableaux based on Hans Christian Andersen's tale of the Emperor and the Nightingale. It demands an astonishing choral range of four octaves. The seventh section, 'The Artificial Bird', is a marvel of invention, with percussive imitations and multiphonics. The ornithological theme is continued with Bruun's pair of Hopkins bird-poem settings. In an accessible and diatonic idiom, they make a splendid and satisfying conclusion to this distinctive programme.

Needless to say, Stephen Layton steers his peerlessly virtuoso musicians through this eclectic and innovative mix with his customary polish and dramatic energy. Also running through it all like a golden thread is Michala Petri's iridescent playing. She uses the full 'chest' of recorders with mercurial ease. This is an unequivocal treat for connoisseurs of fine choral singing and recorder lovers alike.

Malcolm Riley

GRAMOPHONE *Archive*

November 1955: A famous Winterreise

Or perhaps 'the' famous Winterreise would be a more apt description. From the archive, our review of the Moore/Fischer-Dieskau record

Schubert



Winterreise, D911
Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau *bar*
Gerald Moore *pf*
HMV ② ● ALPS1298 / ALP1299
(12in • 61s)

Schubert's great work can mean different things to young and old. A spiritual winter's journey is perhaps more poignant and tragic when old age is upon you. Fischer-Dieskau has the advantage over Hans Hotter of a more appealing and even-toned voice and he does not have to resort to such drastic transpositions. And while the singer's tone in loud passages and also in very soft ones has not always been well supported (and has been even ugly at some climactic moments) he is here in exceptionally good voice. His articulation is crisp and he has a special sense of verbal values and tone colour.

These are impressive gifts, but the last of them can be dangerous. And it seems to me that Fischer-Dieskau has not always avoided the danger. Sometimes he unnecessarily disturbs the vocal line with point-making. And he falls too often into the habit of applying a *crescendo* at the start or end of a phrase where it does not seem to be called for.

A much more debatable point is whether one feels, or not, that Fischer-Dieskau overdramatises some of the songs, such as the end of 'Wasserflut'. This brings me to the main point. From the first song to the last Hotter presents a picture of a weary and disillusioned man, Fischer-Dieskau one of a man vigorous enough to snap his fingers at fate, and rather in revolt against life than disillusioned. Fischer-Dieskau sings the last words of the cycle with ample tone. Another pointer: Hotter gives a peculiar bitterness to his articulation of 'deinen Wurm' in 'Rast', and this is one of the rare instances of a Fischer-Dieskau neglect of a verbal value.

All this is to be hyper-critical; I must stress the high artistic pleasure I derived from Fischer-Dieskau's singing. His *legato* is particularly lovely and he infuses more beauty of tone at the change into modulations than Hotter is able to do. I admire Fischer-Dieskau's performance and would wish to possess it, but it moves me less than Hotter's. Gerald Moore, who excelled in the Hotter recording, plays, if possible, even more superbly here.

Alec Robertson, November 1955

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GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

RENAISSANCE REBIRTHS

As the super-budget label reissues a series of choral collections, **Fabrice Fitch** assesses Brilliant Classics' early music offerings



Chapelle du Roi making the Tallis recordings which originally appeared on Signum Classics

Budget-price reissues are normally self-recommending, especially when the originals are out of print. But the advent of online shopping means that those originals are now far easier to get hold of second-hand than they used to be and may still be a preferable option, depending on whether the original presentation and packaging matter to one. These 'no-frills' reissues from Brilliant are a mixed bag in that regard: the 75 pages of original notes for the 10-disc Tallis set are included on a separate CD but the accompanying materials for the other sets are either minimal or incomplete.

All four packages present the work of a single ensemble. Tallis's complete works were recorded by Chapelle du Roi, Charivari Agréable and a few soloists between 1996 and 2004, and issued as nine separate volumes on 10 CDs. There are conspicuous successes, notably one of the best-judged accounts of the oft-recorded, magnificent *Missa Puer natus est*; a rare outing for the English-texted version of *Spem in alium*; and the instrumental discs, also worth hearing. While not all the performances are out of the top drawer, it seems churlish to complain in the face of such an impressive accomplishment. My only disappointment is that the booklet information is not printed, as it was when the completed set was reissued by Signum. The **Palestrina** set

comes from Pro Cantione Antiqua, the all-male ensemble that has recorded seven of Palestrina's Masses (together with the *Lamentations of Jeremiab*). These include some of Palestrina's most famous, of which the most famous of all, *Missa Papae Marcelli*,

'While not all the performances are out of the top drawer, it seems churlish to complain in the face of such an accomplishment'

elicits the most disappointing performance. The intention to divest the Mass of the triumphalist overtones that have so often characterised previous recordings is certainly welcome but this is achieved with ponderous tempi and an almost lugubrious tone. Far more confident-sounding are the *Missae brevis*, *Assumpta est Maria* and the two

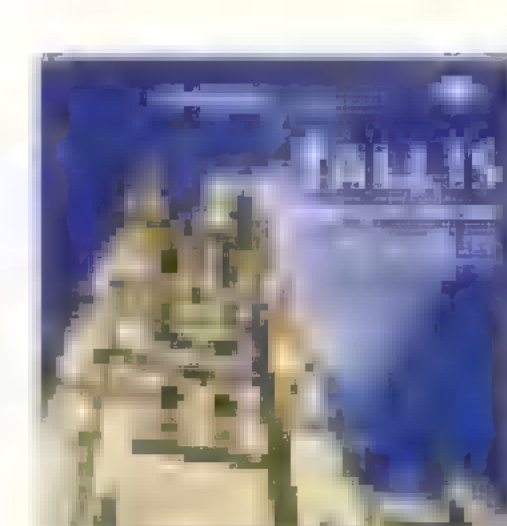
L'homme armé settings. PCA are not alone in offering Palestrina done with an all-male line-up (Delitiae Musicae for Stradivarius, and the soloists of San Petronio in Bologna for Naxos, also did so fruitfully – the latter with similar programmes to PCA), but at their best they're certainly worth hearing.

The Gabrieli Consort's recordings of **Venetian Vespers** for Archiv make up the next set, which comprises three separate projects in five CDs: a Vespers set first issued in 1993, a disc devoted to Gabrieli (1996), an Easter Mass issued the following year. In terms of performance and recording, this is the most consistently impressive of the four sets but it is marred, alas, by amateurish miscalculations in the mastering. The tracks of the Easter Mass are meant to run continuously, and on the original Archiv issue they do; but here, silence appears to have been inserted between tracks. In a liturgical reconstruction such as this, in which events follow uninterruptedly, an integral feature of the project is lost. On the Gabrieli disc, meanwhile, a couple of audible skips in the *Jubilato Deo* stand uncorrected. The *caveat emptor* principle surely applies here.

The last set, **O Magnum Mysterium**, includes Masses by Dufay (*Ecce ancilla*), Ockeghem (Requiem, *Prolationum*, *Cuiusvis toni*), Josquin (*Malheur me bat*) and others, done in the 1970s and '80s by the famous Schola Cantorum Stuttgart. The ensemble was such a pioneer of contemporary music, and its director Clytus Gottwald so firm an advocate of the links between old polyphony and new music, that one would have liked to recommend these recordings more enthusiastically.

It's not so much that the ensemble's vocal style and its make-up, resolutely vibrato-laden and choral, is at odds with current fashion; rather, the challenge of the more intricate polyphony simply eludes it, and Gottwald's choice of tempi seems to clip its collective wings, if I may put it that way. A sympathetic note from Gottwald himself confirms the set's value, but only as a document of performance practice history. ⑥

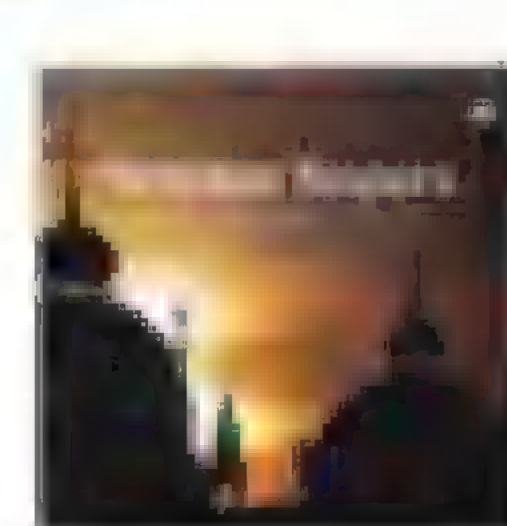
THE RECORDINGS



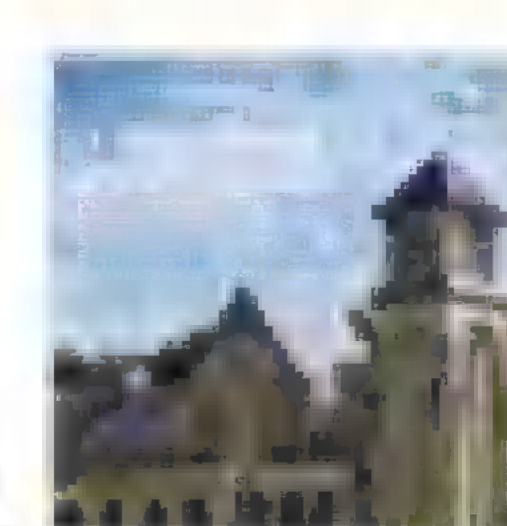
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Gabrieli Consort,
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'O Magnum Mysterium'
Works by
Dufay, Josquin,
Ockeghem et al
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Opera

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Mike Ashman reviews
Marek Janowski's Meistersinger:
'It sounds as though Janowski, like Goodall, has spent valuable time with his orchestral as well as vocal soloists' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 82**



David Vickers reviews
Nuria Rial's Telemann recital:
'Telemann's operas deserve the thumbnail introduction provided by Nuria Rial's delightful performances' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 81**

Debussy

Pelléas and Mélisande (sung in English)

Robert Dean bar..... **Pelléas**
Elene Hannan sop..... **Mélisande**
Neil Howlett bar..... **Golaud**
John Tomlinson bass..... **Arkel**
Sarah Walker mez..... **Geneviève**
Rosanne Brackenridge sop..... **Yniold**
Sean Rea bass..... **Doctor; Shepherd**
Chorus and Orchestra of English National Opera /
Mark Elder

Chandos Opera in English ® ③ CHAN3177

(155' • DDD • S/T)

Recorded live at the Coliseum, London,
November 1981



Chandos transfers the
BBC's 1981 ENO Pelleas

ENO 30 years ago. For the company's first *Pelléas*, a controversial stage production (Harry Kupfer) decidedly not set in some sub-Arthurian fairyland – what relief! – and an English translation by Hugh Macdonald that stirred up controversy from the off when Eilene Hannan's *Mélisande* called out 'Don't touch me! Don't touch me!' Slightly rearranged note values but real, non-translation-ese English: it would become something of a priority during Mark Elder's music-directorship.

Macdonald's English worked in a strong company performance whose original BBC radio sound and balance (helped by Chandos's new transfer) has stood the test of time. John Tomlinson is a sad, wise Arkel, the epitome of an opera where everyone always knows (or intuitively) more than they can bring themselves to say. Neil Howlett is good at the tricky ambivalence that dogs Golaud's every step – is he a sadist, paranoid or just a normal frail human being? Try the worry that he injects into his laugh when (Act 3) he catches *Pelléas* effectively bathing in *Mélisande*'s hair. They're acting like children, or...?

The (innocent?) lovers are well taken. Hannan doesn't attempt the little-girl Gretel-ness that Frederica von Stade did for Karajan in a famous EMI set. Instead, she modifies her natural ardour into a suitably passionate neutrality – *Mélisande*, remember,

was one of Bluebeard's wives. Robert Dean, who in the years since 1981 has become conductor and coach, traces *Pelléas*'s emotional growth well, flinging himself into the aborted love/murder scene in the park (Act 4) with abandon.

Comparisons with some almost contemporary recordings – the 1978 Karajan mentioned above and the 1969 Boulez (leading London's other opera orchestra) – show how clear Elder is in this score, how he has worked to bring out every strand in the harmony, every rhythmic step. And the Coliseum's orchestra of the time were in good shape, the wind soloists worthy of comparison with the 'royal family' sections of the capital's symphony orchestras. Elder's sound feels more German (OK, Wagnerian) than either Karajan or Boulez but his internal and pit/stage balances are well-enough calculated for this not to threaten his singers' being clearly heard. Definitely recommended for Anglophone listeners because it's good, for once, to be able to absorb every word (and nuance) of this complex opera as they slip by.

Mike Ashman

Selected comparisons:

Boulez (10/70®) (SONY) 88697 52722-2

Karajan (12/79®) (EMI) 966723-2

Falvetti

Il diluvio universale

Namur Chamber Choir; Cappella Mediterranea /
Leonardo García Alarcón

Ambronay ® AMY026 (65' • DDD • T/t)



Alarcón revives Falvetti's
striking dialogue oratorio

Michelangelo Falvetti, *maestro di cappella* at Messina Cathedral during the 1680s, is almost as obscure a figure as you can get in these Baroque-hungry days. Yet this disc is not just some worthy exhumation but the rehabilitation of a composition bursting with imagination and gripping drama. Frankly, it is hard to believe it has lain unheard for so long – I even spent a while wondering if it was real.

Il diluvio universale is a sacred 'dialogue' oratorio, in which there is no joined-up narrative but in which the soloists and chorus

take roles in a sequence of dramatic tableaux. The subject is the Flood, and the cast includes God, Noah and his wife and a chorus of drowning folk, as well as Death, Divine Justice, Human Nature and the Four Elements. The musical language calls to mind both Cavalli and Alessandro Scarlatti but the treatment of the various scenes – which include the Elements conjuring a storm, beautiful and tender love music for the pious Noah and Jad, a terrifying depiction of the deluge in which the voices of the drowned break off into cries and shouts, and a sinisterly gleeful dance of Death – are treated with the disarming directness of a medieval narrative painting. There is indeed something 'other' about this piece, a hint of some ancient energy that perhaps reflects how Sicily itself differs from the rest of Italy.

The performers make the most of the lovely present they have been handed, with Leonardo García Alarcón leading a committed and compelling reading which revels in the music's freedom of dramatic expression. There are some lovely solo contributions from Fernando Guimarães as Noah and Mariana Flores as Rad, and the lusty choir and orchestra are totally engaged. I confess I don't quite understand why Arabic percussion has been added, but this thrilling release proves that Baroque music can still hold a few surprises yet. **Lindsay Kemp**

Lully

Atys

Bernard Richter ten..... **Atys**
Stéphanie d'Oustrac mez..... **Cybèle**
Emmanuelle de Negri sop..... **Sangaride**
Nicolas Rivenq bar..... **Célénuis**
Marc Mauillon bar..... **Idas**
Sophie Daneman sop..... **Doris**
Jaël Azzaretti sop..... **Mélisse**
Paul Agnew ten..... **Dieu du Sommeil**
Cyril Auvity ten..... **Morphée**
Bernard Deletré bass..... **Le Temps; Le Fleuve Sangar**
Les Arts Florissants / William Christie

Stage director **Jean-Marie Villégier**

Video director **François Roussillon**

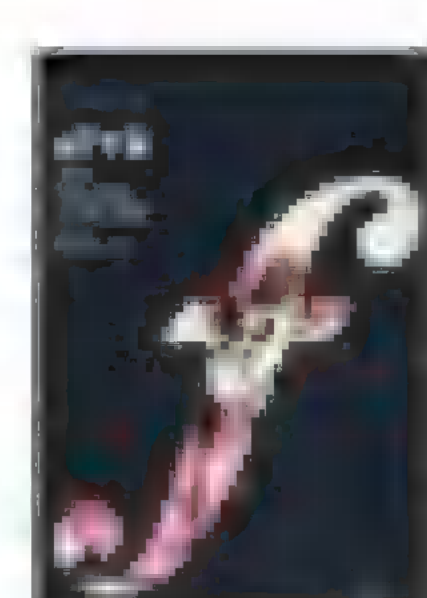
FRA Productions ® ② DVD FRA006

(195' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo & DTS 5.1 • O • s)

Recorded live at the Opéra Comique, Paris, May 2011



Mariana Flores as Noah's wife Rad in Falvetti's Flood oratorio



Philanthropic revival for Villégier's 1987 *Atys*

Hard on the heels of *Armide* (10/11) comes this equally splendid DVD of *Atys*. How the production came about makes a heartening story. The reputation of William Christie and Les Arts Florissants in French Baroque opera dates from their production of *Atys* in 1987 (though I recall an *Hippolyte et Aricie* at the Opéra Comique in 1985 with the 'Ensemble Baroque William Christie'). An American businessman called Ronald P Stanton saw it and loved it. Some 20 years later, despairing of ever seeing *Atys* again, he offered to pay for it to be restaged last May, with the same sets, costumes and choreography, and Jean-Marie Villégier returning as director.

If William Christie's subsequent exploration of Baroque opera was notable for one thing, it was this: the 'historically informed' sounds coming from the orchestra pit were not matched by what was seen on the stage. With directors such as Robert Carsen and Andrei Serban, it could hardly be otherwise. But this visually sumptuous production will satisfy the most diehard

traditionalist. It's true that the sets and costumes are far removed from ancient Phrygia; but they do evoke the time of Louis XIV, Lully's patron. *Atys* was known as 'l'opéra du Roy' and it was revived many times in the king's lifetime.

The goddess Cybèle chooses *Atys*, whom she loves, as her 'sacrificial priest'. *Atys* abuses his position to prevent Sangaride, his own beloved, from marrying Célénus. Cybèle takes a terrible revenge, causing *Atys* to murder Sangaride in a fit of madness. Stéphanie d'Oustrac as Cybèle is magnificent: she is so desperate in 'Espoir si cher, et si doux' that it's impossible not to pity her. When she hears of Sangaride's death, the subtlety of her expression of triumph is mesmerising.

Bernard Richter finds plenty of passion as *Atys*; sadly we don't see him transformed into a pine tree by the remorseful Cybèle. Emmanuelle de Negri catches perfectly the wistfulness of '*Atys est trop heureux*'. In smaller roles, all well taken, Paul Agnew and Sophie Daneman stand out. Chorus, orchestra and conductor are first-class. Mr Stanton must have been thrilled.

Richard Lawrence

Stravinsky



The Rake's Progress

Topi Lehtipuu *ten* Tom Rakewell
 Miah Persson *sop* Anne Trulove
 Matthew Rose *bass* Nick Shadow
 Elena Manistina *mez* Baba the Turk
 Graham Clark *ten* Sellem
 Susan Gorton *mez* Mother Goose
 Clive Bayley *bass* Trulove
 Duncan Rock *bar* Keeper of the Madhouse
 Glyndebourne Chorus; London Philharmonic
 Orchestra / Vladimir Jurowski

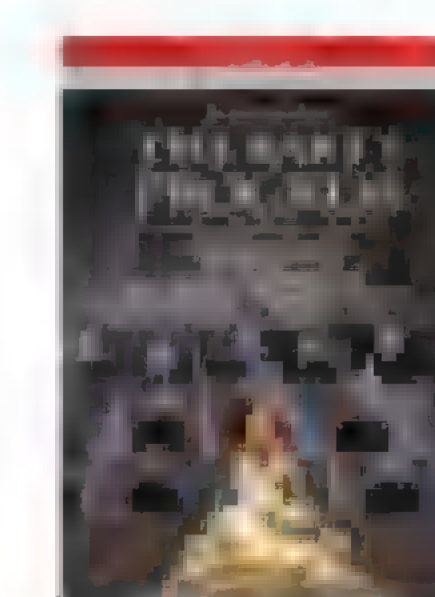
Stage director John Cox

Video director François Roussillon

Opus Arte © DVD OA1062D; © OAB7094D (140' + 19' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • PCM stereo & DTS 5.1 • 0 • s)

Recorded live, December 2010

Features include Interview with David Hockney and Introduction to The Rake's Progress



Screen technology at last for the 'Hockney' Rake's Progress

Students of art history have almost as much reason to thank Glyndebourne for this DVD as opera lovers. A video recording of this production already exists from when it was new in 1975 but David Hockney's designs



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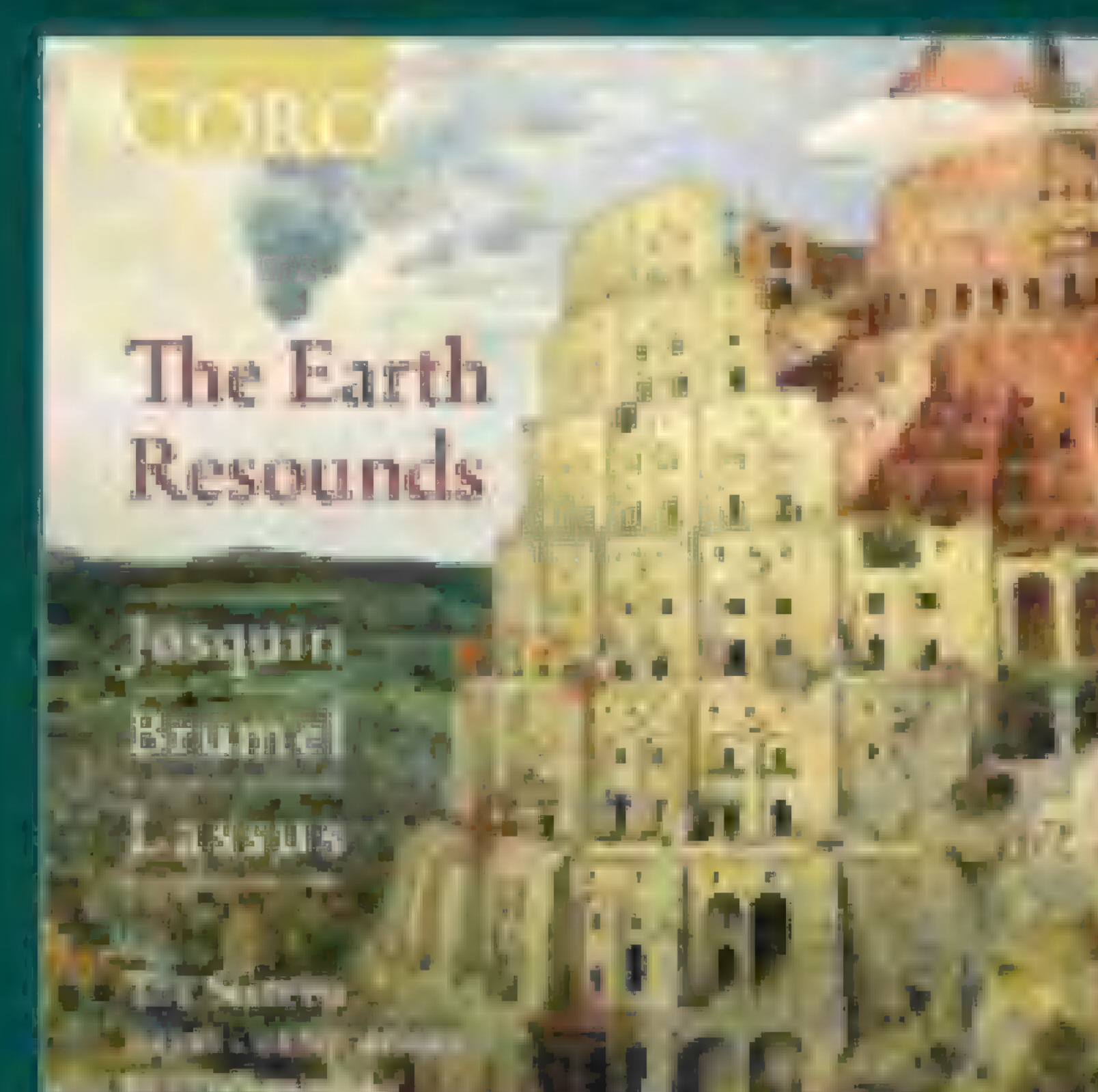
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David Hockney's seminal designs refreshed in new costumes and sets for *The Rake's Progress* at the 2010 Glyndebourne Festival

have never looked as good as they do here, captured with razor-sharp picture quality. This has always been Hockney's *Rake's Progress* as much as anybody else's. Over 30 years on, casts have come and gone, but his unforgettable designs continue to set the agenda. Are they a brilliant, modern take on Hogarth's drawings or a visual counterpart to Stravinsky's neoclassicism? Both, of course, which is why they work so well.

In other respects, though, the production has started to feel its age, the atmosphere here being sweetly naive (on balance a plus) but rather bland (not so good). It is hard to imagine a Tom Rakewell who looks the part better than the lanky, almost adolescent Topi Lehtipuu, his wide-eyed innocence an open invitation to corruption, and he sings the role with elegance. Miah Persson is almost his equal, except that her voice sounds constricted in Anne Trulove's Act 1 solo scene – a shame, as she is predictably lovely from there on, melting hearts in her lullaby to Tom. The weak link is Matthew Rose's Nick Shadow, as this magnificent young bass (heard to such advantage in Glyndebourne's recent CD recording of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) proves unable to create a devilish

persona without more help from the director. Elena Manistina makes a suitably exotic Baba the Turk and Graham Clark a brilliant Sellem. The combination of Vladimir Jurowski and the London Philharmonic Orchestra ensures crisp ensemble of the highest quality, and also more warmth from the pit than might have been expected.

The main competition comes from Opus Arte's 2008 DVD from Brussels. In the theatre I easily preferred Glyndebourne's production but Robert Lepage's cinematic take on the opera – Nick Shadow is a Hollywood film director luring a simple Texan boy to a life of glamour and excess – looks splendid on the small screen and the electricity between the Rake and Nick Shadow crackles. The answer may be to get both. **Richard Fairman**

Selected comparison:

Ono (5/08) (OPUS) OA0991D

Telemann

'Opera Arias'

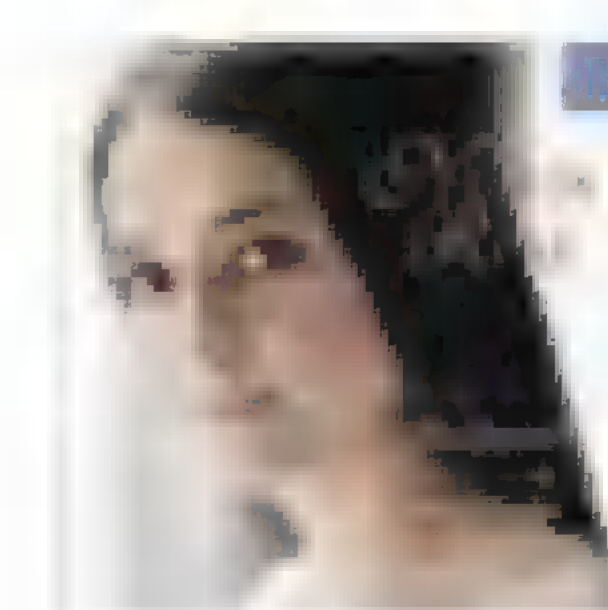
Emma und Eginhard – Overture; Das Auge starrt, die Lippen beben; Erscheine bald du Irrlicht meiner Sinne; Steckt Mars den Degen ein. **Der geduldige Sokrates** – Overture; Mir schmeichelt die Hoffnung;

Mich tröstet die Hoffnung; Meine Tränen werden Wellen. **Germanicus** – Komm o Schlaf, und lass mein Leid. **Der neumodische Liebhaber Damon** – Ach seht mich doch, geliebte. **Der unglückliche Alcmeon** – Ach was für Qual und Schmerz

Nuria Rial *sop*

Basle Chamber Orchestra / Julia Schröder *vn*

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88697 92256-2 (74' • DDD)



Nuria Rial in a traversal of operatic Telemann

The quietly progressing Telemann renaissance means that nowadays admirers are quick to praise the finesse of his best instrumental compositions and enthuse about his clear influence on friends Handel and Bach. Meanwhile, interest in Telemann's operas has lagged behind. There might be perfectly sensible reasons for this, such as the frequent polyglot nature of peculiar operas that contain plenty of musical attractions but lack the psychological potency of Handel, the flamboyance of Vivaldi or the imagination of Rameau. However, they deserve the thumbnail introduction provided by Nuria Rial's delightful performances of extracts from five different operas, which range from



Dramatic unity (from L-R): Alastair Miles, Salvatore Licitra, Nina Stemme and Carlos Álvarez in *La forza del destino*

early Leipzig works (*Germanicus* and *Der unglückliche Alcmeon*) to operas written later on for Hamburg's important Gänsemarkt Theatre (*Der geduldige Sokrates* and *Emma und Eginbard*).

The diverse programme is selected shrewdly. 'Komm o Schlaf' (*Germanicus*), with plucked basso continuo, is a beguiling sleep aria ideal for Rial's intimate soft singing; a pair of recorders make a tender contribution to 'Mir schmeichelt die Hoffnung' (*Der geduldige Sokrates*). Rial impresses in impassioned outbursts such as the heroine's anguished accompanied recitative and eloquent lament 'Erscheine bald du Irrlicht meiner Sinne' (*Emma und Eginbard*), and virtuoso recorder solos make a dazzling impact in 'Mich tröstet die Hoffnung' (*Der geduldige Sokrates*). The Basle Chamber Orchestra's director Julia Schröder demonstrates her skills as soloist in two contrasting violin concertos that each served as an opera overture, and she plays an expressive dialogue with Rial during 'Ach was für Qual und Schmerz' (*Der unglückliche Alcmeon*). My sole criticism is the substandard editing of the booklet. **David Vickers**

Verdi

La forza del destino

Nina Stemme *sop* Leonora
Salvatore Licitra *ten* Don Alvaro
Carlos Álvarez *bar* Don Carlo
Alastair Miles *bass*
..... Padre Guardiano; Marquis of Calatrava
Nadia Krasteva *mez* Preziosilla
Tiziano Bracci *bass-bar* Fra Melitone
Michael Roider *ten* Trabuco
Elisabeta Marin *sop* Curra

Chorus and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera / Zubin Mehta

Stage director **David Pountney**

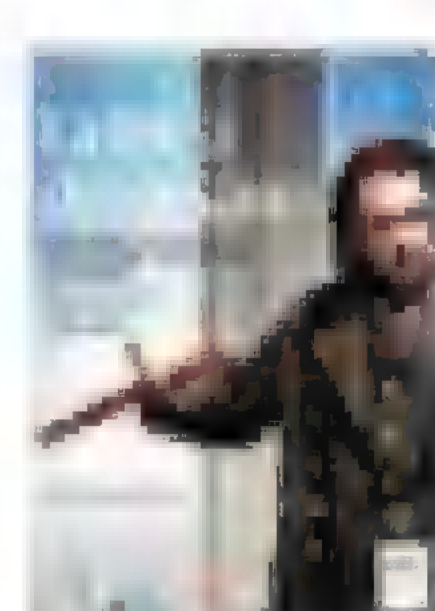
Video director **Karina Fibich**

C Major (F) ② DVD 708108; (F) ③ 708204

(161' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • PCM stereo,

DTS 5.0 & DTS-HD MA • 0 • s)

Recorded live 2008



Now on DVD: Pountney's 2008 Forza from Vienna

Is *La forza del destino* Verdi's best shot at *Il re Lear*? A grand-opera update of late Donizetti and Bellini historical epics? Or the composer's most modern work to date (this Vienna performance gives the standard 1869 revision) in its running-together of tragedy, rough quasi-Brechtian comedy and 'time-out' ensemble spectacle – with the modernist postscript that the opera was surely designed to feel like one long interrupted duet for Carlo and Alvaro?

The production team here – David Pountney, Richard Hudson and their fiery choreographer Beate Vollack – prove that these three sides of the opera, undisguised and played all out, create the work's dramatic unity. Hudson's revolving set – scaffolding towers for the Act 3 battle scenes and a long-tongue rostrum with a single wall entry for the Calatravas, the tavern and Leonora's hermit cave – consign lengthy scene changes to the dustbin. Costumes range from the 1860s to today for Vollack's Wild West cabaret girls, fearlessly led and voiced by Nadia Krasteva's Preziosilla. Zubin Mehta's well-marshalled, unindulgent,

unselfconscious conducting is ideal for both this work and production.

Pountney's unfussily direct handling of the tragic side of the drama plays to his cast's strengths. Compared to his colleagues here, the late Salvatore Licitra may not have been the stage's most natural actor but, at full rip in the final confrontation with Álvarez's Carlo or in the more internal Act 3 arias, a terrific passion carries all before it. Álvarez (and Pountney) make the fatal hesitation which always prevents Carlo doing anything 'good' (or charitable) especially clear and scary. Alistair Miles's double of the two father figures strengthens the impression that Calatrava and Padre Guardiano are Verdi's Lear and Kent in waiting. Bracci's Melitone has evidently (been) worked hard to spare an excess of *buffo* clowning. And Nina Stemme's Leonora? A hugely well-acted assumption of the role, with (in the 'Pace! Pace, mio dio' scena) the uncanny presence and vocal fury previously offered by Price, Barstow or Freni. Sound and vision are both helpful and this is the best realised of the four current *Forza* DVDs. **Mike Ashman**

Wagner

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg

Albert Dohmen *bar* Hans Sachs
Robert Dean Smith *ten* Walther
Edith Haller *sop* Eva
Georg Zeppenfeld *bass* Pogner
Dietrich Henschel *bass* Beckmesser
Peter Sonn *ten* David
Michelle Breedt *mez* Magdalena
Tuomas Pursio *bass* Kothner
Michael Smallwood *ten* Vogelgesang
Sebastian Noack *bass* Nachtigall
Jörg Schörner *bass* Zorn
Thomas Ebenstein *ten* Eisslinger
Thorsten Scharnke *ten* Moser
Tobias Berndt *bass* Ortel
Hans-Peter Scheidegger *bass* Schwarz
Hyung Wook Lee *bass* Foltz
Matti Salminen *bass* Nightwatchman

Berlin Radio Chorus; Berlin Radio Symphony

Orchestra / Marek Janowski

Pentatone (F) ④ PTC5186 402

(4h 13' • DDD/DSD • S/T/t)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Berlin, June 3, 2011



Second stop on Janowski's mature Wagner marathon

Despite his bizarre fears about stage directors (see *Gramophone*, A/11), Marek Janowski is no slouch when it comes to imparting decisive character and atmosphere to his opera performances. Starting with a barely more than eight-minute overture, this second step in the 72-year-old Polish maestro's bicentennial Berlin concert cycle of mature Wagner is a swift, light, comic reading of the

score, more Lortzing than *Tristan*. It has much of the narrative thrust of Rudolf Kempe's old Berlin EMI set and, while we're handing out similes, it also sounds as if Janowski, like Reginald Goodall, has spent valuable sectional time with his orchestral as well as his vocal soloists. The delicate cello in the introduction to 'Am stillen Herd' or the colour and point of the wind-playing in the little Act 3 intermezzo where Beckmesser comes spying in Sachs's workshop are classy and delightful.

On this particular June evening Albert Dohmen sounded at home across the whole spectrum of Sachs's poetry, wistfulness and wit. He and Janowski avoid making too much black-dog mood in the 'Wahn' scene or excessive anger and self-pity over Eva's attraction to Walther. Meanwhile, Dietrich Henschel essays a Beckmesser who can be all of pompous, weird, a credible vocalist in both serenade and prize song to Eva – and funny. (His attempt on the prize song has a crazy credibility not a million miles away from Bayreuth's recent take on the number as anarchic performance art.) Sonn is imaginative in David's tricky cataloguing of all the tones, Zeppenfeld a Pogner of real passion and concern. Magdalene, the other masters and the chorus – challenged by (but more than coping with) Janowski's pace and bounce on the Festwiese – are strong contributors.

So far, so fine. It must be said, however, that the lovers were not quite so exciting at the single evening's performance on which this set is based. Robert Dean Smith, Bayreuth's successful current *Tristan*, doesn't essay a wide enough range of colour in the comparatively higher reaches of Walther's mood-swings – although he and Janowski manage a nice private rehearsal feeling for the dictation of the dream prize song to Sachs. Edith Haller, an ideal Eva on paper, comes across as shy and *innig*, a cosy father's daughter but insufficiently heroic in the 'O Sachs! Mein Freund!' outburst.

Janowski's achievement is to have recreated a genuine comic feel for the piece. Bayreuth's old, almost complete Furtwängler or more recent Barenboim are darker, more *Tristan*-like; Kempe, Cluytens, the Dresden Karajan and (slow speeds and English language notwithstanding) Goodall lighter and more comic. Toscanini in 1937 offers the most heaven of all but even the most recent transfer has not yet made this Selenophone original a hi-fi experience. **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparisons:

Karajan (7/88th) (EMI) 640788-2

Kempe (2/93rd) (MAGD) METCD8001

Cluytens (10/98) (MUSI) CD1011

Goodall (8/08) (CHAN) CHAN3148

Barenboim (TEL) 2564 67899-9

Furtwängler (MUSI) CD1153 or (WALH) WLCD0050

Toscanini (GRAM) AB7703/06

'Pure Diva'

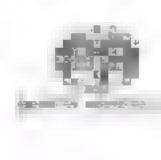
'Tribute to Joan Hammond'

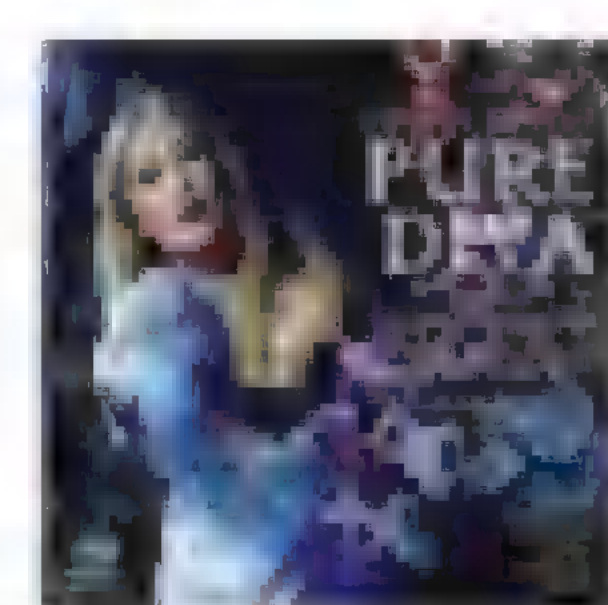
Bishop Home Sweet Home^b **Coates** The Green Hills of Somerset^b **Dvořák** Rusalka – Song to the Moon^a

Korngold Die tote Stadt – Marietta's Lied^a

Offenbach Les contes d'Hoffmann – Elle a fui, la tourterelle^a **Purcell** Dido and Aeneas – Dido's Lament^a **Settle** Shadows^b **Tchaikovsky** Eugene Onegin – Tatyana's Letter Scene^a **Traditional**

The Last Rose of Summer^b **Verdi** Otello^a – Willow Song; Ave Maria. Don Carlo – Tu che le vanità^a

Cheryl Barker *sop* ^b**Timothy Young** *pl* ^a**Queensland Symphony Orchestra** / **Guillaume Tourniaire**
Melba  MR301129 (79' • DDD)



Cheryl Barker pays tribute to a great diva of the 1960s

Australian ears might apprehend this disc with less puzzlement. The iconic significance of Joan Hammond is more obvious to those who lived through the late 1960s, when her English-language recordings of Puccini arias were best-sellers. Observing Cheryl Barker follow in Hammond's footsteps over the past decade with English-language opera recordings no doubt prepares one's ears for enjoying her virtues rather than being distracted by the obtrusive quirks that are now rampant, both in the voice itself and the singer's compulsion to push it hardest when the music (and the microphone that's recording her) least needs stentorian vocalism.

The disc starts well enough with dramatically adept readings of Tatyana's Letter Scene, Desdemona's Willow Song and Ave Maria and the *Don Carlo* aria 'Tu che la vanità', though interpretative specificity is tempered by the spreading vibrato and strident, mannered effects that come with making her essentially pleasing mid-weight voice into something larger and more penetrating. In Antonia's lovely aria from *The Tales of Hoffmann*, one is dumbfounded at how Barker ultimately ignores the music's demure emotional temperature and, though a student of Hammond's, strays so far from the confiding warmth and vocal storytelling that were her teacher's hallmarks.

The songs that end the disc are even more disheartening. Besides giving them moments of inappropriately operatic magnitude, each note is sung more as a separate entity, not as part of a musical conversation. Orchestra, conductor and pianist may well be doing excellent work, though it's difficult to tell amid the distraction of Barker's problematic vocalism. Were I a pure diva, I wouldn't have let this disc be released.

David Patrick Stearns

'Slavic Heroes'

Borodin Prince Igor – Igor's Aria **Dvořák**

The Cunning Peasant – Prince's Aria **Moniuszko**

Halka – Janusz's Aria. The Haunted Manor –

Miecznik's Aria. Verbum nobile – Come, let

enervating sun **Rachmaninov** Aleko –

Aleko's Cavatina **Rimsky-Korsakov** Sadko – Song

of the Venetian Guest **Smetana** The Devil's Wall –

Only one woman's pretty face has so moved me

Szymanowski King Roger – Hymn to Apollo

Tchaikovsky Eugene Onegin – You wrote to me;

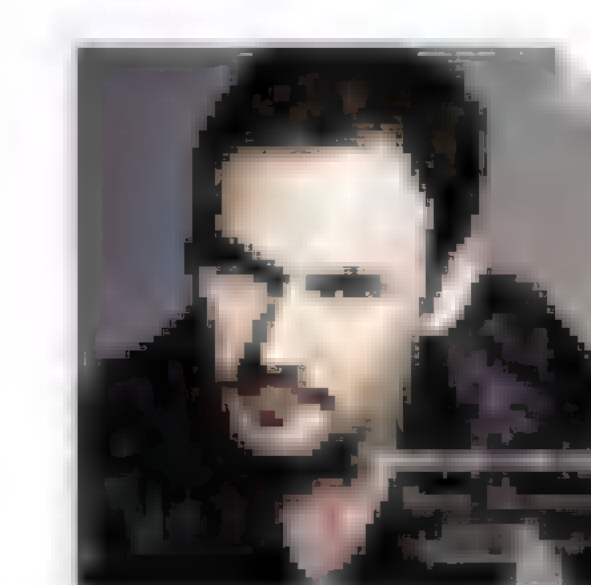
Can this really be the same Tatyana?. Iolanta –

Robert's Aria. Mazeppa – O Maria, Maria

Mariusz Kwiecień *bar* **Polish Radio Symphony**

Orchestra / **Łukasz Borowicz**

Harmonia Mundi  HMW90 6101 (55' • DDD • T/T)



Debut solo recording for Polish baritone Kwiecień

Regardless of one's admiration for Mariusz Kwiecień's singing on this disc, the programming fills a valuable niche: the smartly chosen and sequenced arias by Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Moniuszko and Szymanowski give each other needed context, particularly in the more exotic corners of the Slavic repertoire. The two *Onegin* scenes stand like bookends, giving a point of reference for the lesser known composers as well as great scenes by others that aren't fully appreciated in the long haul of a complete stage performance. Though Rachmaninov's *Aleko* is an uneven work, you'd never know it from the title-character's compelling soliloquy and cavatina, aided particularly by Borowicz's knowing treatment of the orchestration. The disc ends with the *King Roger* scene that embodies much that came before it, transmuted into its own Richard Strauss-era harmonic language. The typically meticulous packaging assures that full texts and good translations are provided.

Invariably, Kwiecień gives vocally solid, passionate accounts of the music. His well-focused (if not exceptionally glamorous) baritone gives a luxuriously clean sense of line to scenes from *Mazeppa* and *Prince Igor* that are usually sung by more commanding but woolier Russian bass-baritones.

Kwiecień's *Onegin* is particularly nuanced.

Elsewhere in the Russian repertoire, comparisons with the casts in some of the Gergiev/Kirov recordings show Kwiecień's clean vocalism isn't always preferable to the interpretative depths of, say, Nikolai Putulin in *Mazeppa*. Also, one can't be surprised when a certain number of the performances in any recital disc are less studied and fall into generic operatic postures. Kwiecień only does so in his native tongue, as in his monochromatic excerpt from *Halka*.

Perhaps that music gave him less to discover?

David Patrick Stearns

Books



Richard Whitehouse reviews a symposium on a 20th-century great:

'Most important...is the extent to which Ligeti has remained at the forefront of European musical thinking'



John Warrack on a new evaluation of Igor Stravinsky's ballets:

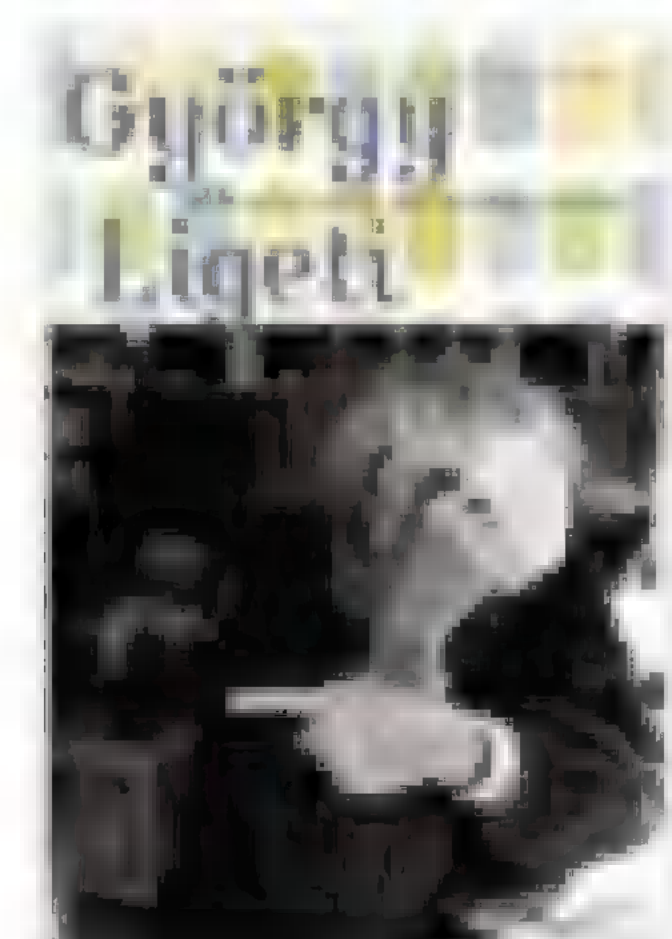
'This is essentially a study for any listener who responds to the dance element which coursed through Stravinsky's imagination'

György Ligeti: Of Foreign Lands and Strange Sounds

Edited by Louise Duchesneau and Wolfgang Marx

Boydell & Brewer, HB, 336pp, £45

ISBN 978-1-843-83550-9



The status of György Ligeti in contemporary musical culture can be gauged from the fact that, in the six years since his death, his work has shown few signs of the falling from favour that affects the posthumous reputation of many comparable figures. Life and music have been variously surveyed, Richard Steinitz's *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination* (Faber: 2003) the primary English study. As its title implies, the present volume has ranged widely in the ground that its 13 chapters traverse – in the process underlining the eventfulness of the composer's musical journey and the breadth of enquiry he drew upon in the fashioning of his unique idiom.

One of the main attractions of such a book is that its content can be read (and re-read) in any order, according to preference. None of the chapters here is in any sense 'filler' material, though the following are of especial note. Friedemann Sallis examines the relationship between Ligeti and Sándor Veress, a figure whose towering pedagogical significance has often obscured his standing as a composer. Wolfgang Marx looks at the concept of death in Ligeti's music – crucial in view of the latter's repeated proximity to death during his earlier years and whose presence takes in both the anarchic and the profound on the way to its most graphic representation in the opera *Le Grand Macabre*. Simha Arom writes on the impact that African music had on the rhythmic and syntactical aspects of Ligeti's thinking, helping him to overcome the stylistic impasse he had reached by the late 1970s as well as a means of distancing himself from the European avant-garde he felt had long since run aground: the resultant synthesis being a 'world music' wholly removed from the banalities so often associated with the concept. Jonathan W Bernard draws worthwhile conclusions and

welcome contentions from a close study of the compositional sketches that are housed mainly at the Sacher Foundation in Basle – offering many insights into the often protracted process, along with some intuitive leaps of faith, by which Ligeti arrived at confirmation of his speculations. Wolfgang-Andreas Schultz surveys Ligeti's role as teacher and mentor to a host of students – primarily, though not exclusively, in Hamburg – for whom his highly personal harnessing of tradition and innovation proved to be vexing and inspiring by turns. Lastly, Paul Griffiths examines the works for orchestra that largely define the earlier stage of Ligeti's maturity but which medium he then abandoned in favour of the highly individualised ensembles and chamber orchestras of the music from his last two decades.

Throughout, editorial standards are of the highest (hardly something that can be taken for granted these days), while an abundance of music examples, charts, diagrams and – at the centre of the volume – reproductions of sketch material help clarify the issues at hand. Steinitz's magisterial survey remains the essential introduction to the composer and his music but, for anyone looking to extend their knowledge and understanding of both these aspects, the present book can be cordially recommended, fulfilling as it does the remit of a broad-based symposium while making for an absorbing read whether in terms of its individual chapters or of the contents viewed as a whole. The bibliography included towards the close is notably comprehensive, the discographical coverage appreciably less so, though this hardly affects the quality of the book overall. Most important of all, what emerges from these pages is the extent to which Ligeti has remained at the forefront of European musical thinking – his select output anticipating and absorbing as well as transcending elements that have atrophied at the hands of lesser contemporaries into an idiom which, if Western art music is to continue on its wayward and often unpredictable evolution, will have had a not insubstantial role and might just turn out to be its salvation. **Richard Whitehouse**

Stravinsky's Ballets

By Charles M Joseph

Yale University Press, HB, 320pp, £25

ISBN 978-0-300-11872-8



'I am the vessel through which *Le sacre* passed,' Stravinsky is often quoted as having declared. He is far from being the only composer who has liked to portray himself as the humble receptacle of pure inspiration (Wagner always minimised the extent of his own studies). Even if we could be sure about every detail of the conversations with Robert Craft, from which the remark is taken, there is the evidence of the copious sketches of *The Rite*, published in 1969 and discussed in great detail in the first of Richard Taruskin's two mighty tomes, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (OUP: 1996) Into everything Stravinsky did there went hard work and meticulous craft, and this was as true of his ballets as of any other music. Charles M Joseph is not taken



Nijinsky as Petrushka in Stravinsky's 1911 ballet



György Ligeti: a composer as respected after his death as he was during his life

in and, reckoning that dance music occupied about a third of Stravinsky's output, gives thorough accounts of all that helped to shape the scores. He does not go over the now familiar ground of the folk elements in *The Rite* and in any case is not naturally at home with the Russian background; indeed, he seems to underestimate the extent to which essentially Russian characteristics remained in Stravinsky's music throughout his life. No original Russian sources are cited, except in translation, and the account of the background of *The Rite* would have benefited from a thorough discussion of Diaghilev's *Mir iskusstva* journal and its artistic circle (well summarised by Taruskin). But he is good on Nicholas Roerich, whose collaboration on the designs and the whole Slavonic background was so central an element, and then on all the creative and collaborative tensions that built up to the famous scandal of the first performance. And it is right to conclude by defending Stravinsky's direct reliance on his ear, above and beyond all that analysis can unpack.

The originality of Stravinsky's approach to different creative tasks is shown in the

discussion of, in particular, two of the ballets in his long collaboration with Balanchine. Joseph tracks skilfully how Stravinsky's ideas of order in the ballet *Apollo* found their technical inspiration with the Alexandrine, the 12-syllable verse line, parted in the middle with a caesura, that became the biblical ordinance for the French classical theatre especially in the hands of Racine and Corneille. Stravinsky's acceptance of its strictness provided him with a rigour he could, typically, turn to his own musical ends. Here is not only a token homage to Apollo as the god of light, order, balance, proportion, in association with the Muses (the original title went so far as to elect him their leader, *Apollon musagète*), but a meticulous attention to a classical discipline that claimed its origins in Latin poetry and Horace. More than 100 sketches went into the formation of the music.

By the time of *Agon* in the 1950s, Stravinsky had come under other important influences, those of TS Eliot and of Webern. This time the technical inspiration came from a book given to him by Lincoln Kirstein, a reprint of a 17th-century dance

treatise. François de Lauze's *Apologie de la danse* furnished him with details so that, Joseph writes, 'as in virtually every ballet he wrote, the composer was immersed in the choreographic conception from the outset, often notating specific dance patterns as he worked through his initial compositional sketches'. An illustration showing a girl snapping her fingers as she dances supports this (though rather than the *double pas de quatre* for eight female dancers, it seems more illustrative of the *bransle gay* for one female dancer, with its clicking castanets).

For each of the ballets, especially the Balanchine collaborations, Joseph provides excellent discussions of how a choreographic idea stimulated Stravinsky to music of a kind that was both particular to the artistic task in hand and entirely personal. In some of the chapters, the reader will need a score; in some a little technical knowledge of music is called for. But this is essentially a study for any listener who responds to the dance element which coursed through Stravinsky's imagination and which Joseph expounds in brightly illuminating detail.

John Warrack

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of reissues and archive recordings

Tchaikovsky all the way

Hits and misses in the latest Brilliant box • Svetlanov's ballets

Brilliant Classics has a maddening habit of slipping the odd rarity into collections that would otherwise seem relatively conventional. Take the 60-CD **Tchaikovsky Edition**, which covers much ground in performances of varying quality. The symphonies are shared between Gennadi Rozhdestvensky (Nos 4-6 – his least distinguished versions of them, with the LSO), Vladimir Fedoseyev (rather more interesting in No 1 and, especially, No 3) and Yuri Simonov (somewhat mannered in No 2 and *Manfred*). The orchestral Suites are spruce and well played by the Stuttgart Radio Symphony under Sir Neville Marriner but if you turn to the ballets – all three rendered memorably regal by the Suisse Romande under Ernest Ansermet, although *Swan Lake* is cut – then there are some surprising fill-ups, again involving Ansermet. The Third and Fourth Suites feature the (uncredited) violinist Ruggiero Ricci and, although less neat and tidy than Marriner's,

'All three ballets are rendered memorably regal by the Suisse Romande under Ansermet'

are interpretatively more eventful. We're also given Ansermet's perceptive and often exciting Suisse Romande *Pathétique*.

A historical 'supplement' includes a sequence under Evgeny Mravinsky's baton that is both revelatory and frustrating. The version of the Fifth Symphony chosen from 1982 was previously out on Russian Disc and Russian Revelation while the 1972 recording of *Francesca da Rimini* – a towering performance by any standards – has previously only appeared on BMG in Japan. Excerpts from *The Nutcracker* and *The Sleeping Beauty* made me yearn for more complete representation from both (mono) recordings, the latter especially, which is among Mravinsky's finest. Why just

the *Pas de deux*, for goodness' sake? There was so much more on the original (rare) 10" LP.

Other 'historicals' include the Violin Concerto with David Oistrakh (1968) and Leonid Kogan (1950), and the First Piano Concerto with Lev Oborin (especially good, 1948), Emil Gilels (1949), Sviatoslav Richter (1968) and Evgeny Kissin (1987 – historic?!). The main sequence includes Byron Janis's excellent Mercury recording of the same work (with the London Symphony Orchestra under Herbert Menges, not with the Minneapolis Symphony under Stanisław Skrowaczewski, as claimed by Brilliant), and Shura Cherkassky's mercurial Vox rendition of the Second Concerto with Walter Susskind conducting. Other works feature soloists Viktor Tretyakov (violin), Alexander Rudin (cello) and Michael Ponti (piano). The Oistrakh Trio plays the Piano Trio, the Endellion Quartet (either on their own or augmented) the chamber works for strings and, as for the operas, many are offered in vintage recordings involving fêted stars of the Bolshoi under Vassily Nebolsin (*Mazeppa*), Samuel Samosud (*The Enchantress*), Alexander Melik-Pashayev (*The Queen of Spades*) and Boris Khaikin (*The Maid of Orléans*). There are more recent if less comprehensively appealing Italian live performances (of *Cherevichki* and *Oprichnik*) under Rozhdestvensky, and 1996 versions of *Eugene Onegin* (Samuel Friedmann) and *Iolanta* (Alexei Ludmilin). The songs feature Ljuba Kazarnovskaya, who sounded a deal good more secure in 1997, when she started the project, than she did in 2006, when she finished it. Choral works are included, and so are many shorter pieces. A CD-ROM includes song texts and booklet-notes.

It's a real curate's egg, a treasure trove in so many respects, though quite how the unsuspecting novice will feel when chancing upon the Oistrakh Trio or one of the older opera recordings is anyone's guess. If the

music's the thing, rather than the sound, and you don't already have many of the recordings, then invest without delay. It's a great bargain.

If on the other hand the ballets are your main priority, then Melodiya has reissued **Evgeni Svetlanov's** highly dynamic if occasionally unsubtle 1980-88 recordings of all three as an eight-CD set. The playing of the USSR State Academic Symphony Orchestra is often quite brilliant, the characterisation imaginative and there's more of *Swan Lake* than you get with Ansermet. The rather crude sound has a period 'widescreen' appeal though full textures tend towards coarseness. Still, listening to the set made me realise just how much Svetlanov is missed. He certainly didn't hold anything back.

THE RECORDINGS



'Tchaikovsky Edition'
Various artists Brilliant Classics
Ⓢ (60 CDs + CD-ROM) 93980



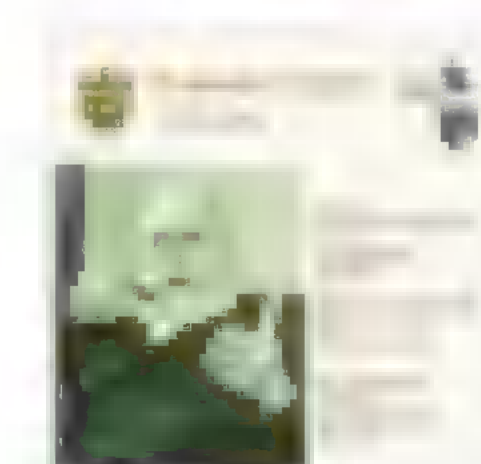
Tchaikovsky Ballets USSR State Academic Orch / Svetlanov
Melodiya Ⓢ Ⓢ MELCD100 1951

Beecham pays tribute to Furtwängler

Another conductor who didn't hold anything back was **Sir Thomas Beecham** and, given the evidence of a recent Somm 'Beecham Collection' CD, he didn't always hold things together, either. What we have here is a compilation taken from a pair of concerts that Beecham gave at the Royal Festival Hall in January 1955 in memory of his friend Wilhelm Furtwängler, who had died during the previous November. Furtwängler had planned a London visit with the Berlin Philharmonic and the programmes were scheduled to include two works that Beecham conducted in January,

Strauss's *Don Juan*, which sounds best when the full orchestra is going hell for leather, and Handel's Concerto grosso, Op 6 No 10, which Furtwängler cut (omitting the second *Allegro*) and had the final *Allegro moderato* emerge from the dying embers of the preceding *Allegro*. Beecham's (complete) performance is more robust, his closing *Allegro moderato* almost matter-of-fact by comparison, but his view of Bach's Third *Brandenburg Concerto* is much more on Furtwängler's wavelength, boisterous and big-boned, with lower strings barging to the fore near the first movement's close. Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel* comes into its own from around 9'50", the last big climax (fabulous timpani-playing from Lewis Pocock). As for Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole*, it would be difficult to imagine a less idiomatic performance or one that seems less sure of itself (ie the start of the Habanera). So, hardly 'essential Beecham' but...interesting, for all that.

THE RECORDINGS



Handel, Bach, Ravel, Strauss, etc
RPO / Beecham
 Somm © SOMM-BEECHAM31

Elgar's first recordings

Few composer-interpreters were as compelling in their own music as **Sir Edward Elgar** was. The great man's electrically recorded legacy has long enjoyed classic status among collectors but his horn-recorded 78s are less well known. They include a number of pieces that Elgar only ever committed to disc once, works such as *The Fringes of the Fleet*, *Carillon* and the delightful *Starlight Express*. Lani Spahr's new transfers, using pressings from the composer's own library (plus a couple of unissued takes) sometimes give the illusion that the recordings are younger than they actually are: the bass signal is surprisingly strong and surface levels quieter than you might expect. Musically, the cuts are sometimes cause for mild amusement: in the case of *Cockaigne*, a reduced total timing of 4'12" more suggests 'Cockaigne: The Bare Essentials'. The paring down of the Violin Concerto (with Marie Hall) and the Cello Concerto (with Beatrice Harrison) to around 16 minutes apiece was ingenious, though *In the South* is far less savagely cut and the Second Symphony is offered complete. Other works include the *Enigma* Variations, the *Sea Pictures* (with Leila Megane) and various shorter pieces. The performances are often quite unlike their newsreel-style successors. The First *Pomp and Circumstance* March is shorn of its faster music and left only with its fanfares and an extremely broad 'Land of Hope and Glory'. It occupied one side of a 78, but then so did its very different electrically recorded successor,



People's Artist: Evgeni Svetlanov conducting the USSR State Academic Orchestra

so not every artistic decision was down to the limitations of contemporary technology. Fascinating, and very well annotated.

THE RECORDINGS



'Elgar conducts Elgar': The Complete Recordings 1914-1925
 Music & Arts © ④ CD1257

Beethoven from Washington

Connoisseurs of vintage quartet-playing will doubtless be delighted that Bridge has at long last released the final volume in its **Beethoven** quartet cycle as played live at Washington's Library of Congress by the legendary Budapest Quartet. In sifting through around a hundred recorded performances by the Quartet given during the period from the 1930s through to the 1960s, David Starobin and his colleagues have achieved a dazzling overview of the Quartet's Beethoven style during its latter years. The present release showcases the epoch-making Op 18 set,

where the role of second violinist is played either by Edgar Ortenberg (in concerts from 1944) or Alexander Schneider (featured from 1943 to 1962). As Starobin notes, you'd never guess from the recorded evidence that Op 18 No 3 was taken from Ortenberg's first gig with the foursome, given the way he blends in and the ease of his virtuosity. I was also happy that the vital and dramatic performance of Op 18 No 4 shows the later ensemble in its best light, especially when you consider that some of the Quartet's last studio recordings (the final [stereo] Beethoven cycle is now out as a Sony Masters collection) tend to catch the players sounding tired. The recording quality on the present set is variable – no question that these are vintage sound documents – but I'd say that, viewed overall, Bridge's release now stands alongside the classic 1951-52 Sony cycle (last on United Archives – 12/06) as the best of the Budapest Quartet's Beethoven on CD.

THE RECORDINGS



Beethoven Early Quartets
Budapest Quartet
 Bridge © ② BRIDGE9342

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Unsung heroes of the bow

They may not be household names nowadays but **Rob Cowan** argues that these 10 vintage violinists should be far better known than they are



Bronislaw Huberman: a challenging violinist with something to teach us all

Violinists, like singers, have very different voices. Also, again like singers, the further back in time you travel, the more stylistically unlike they become, which is why discovering these past masters is such a humbling and uplifting experience. We might also recall that, for the most part, the various violinists under discussion learnt their art directly from their teachers, and not from hearing other players' recordings.

Some of the big names of the past are still regularly heard on CD, people such as Kreisler, Heifetz, Milstein, Oistrakh, Kogan,

Busch and a handful more, but there are many highly distinguished violinists who nowadays hardly get a look in, and those are the ones, or at least some of them, that I'd like to champion here. Even so, there are others that I haven't managed to include. I'm thinking of the highly volatile Guila Bustabo, of Alfredo Campoli, so often wrongly marginalised as a 'salon' player whereas he was in effect a great deal more than that. Similarly, Louis Kaufman was for years stereotyped as a sweet-sounding soundtrack soloist (albeit a superbly accomplished one), although he made the first LP of *The Four Seasons* and

offered us countless recorded premieres of other works. The Polish Josef Hassid, lost to us at a tragically young age, was bursting with promise and although Eudice Shapiro lived to ripe old age her immense gifts were never adequately recognised, at least not on this side of the Pond. Add such names as David Nadien, Aida Stucki or Gioconda de Vito and you'll easily get my drift.

Hopefully, if this selective list engages your attention, and you respond positively to at least some of these marvellous players, you can venture out on an exploratory journey of your own. **G**



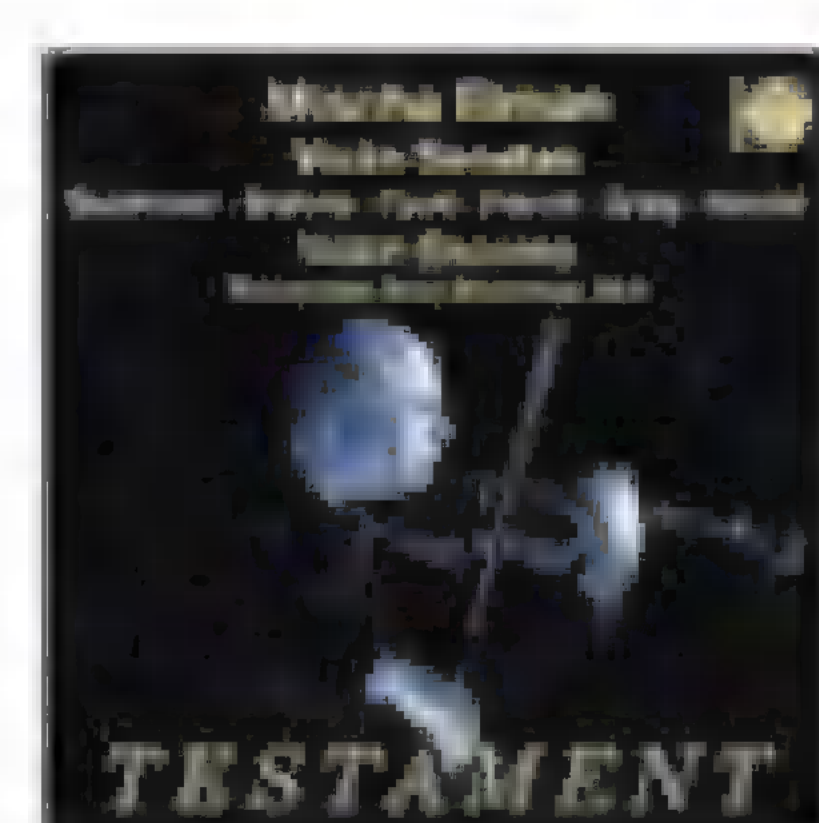
10 *Georges Enescu*

Bach's Solo Sonatas and Partitas (1948)

Naxos (S) ② 9 80208/9

Romania's Renaissance man

of music was among the last century's most charismatic violinists, teacher of Menuhin and Ferras (among others), whose influence can be heard in virtually every note of their playing. These Bach recordings are flawed. They date from towards the end of Enescu's life and yet, in spite of rough edges and occasional lapses of intonation, their conceptual purity, tonal amplitude and rich emotional climate remain spellbinding.



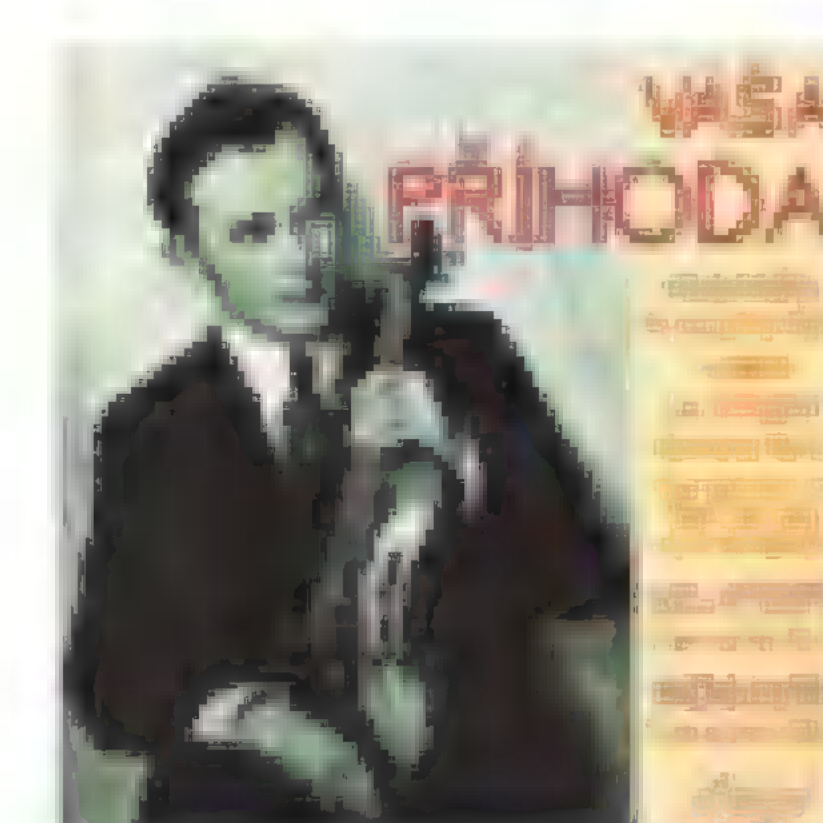
9 *Mischa Elman*

Violin sonatas and violin encores (1955-56)

Testament (F) ④ SBT4 1344

In his day Elman was celebrated

for a tone that outshone even Kreisler's, and although the glow had dimmed somewhat by the time these recordings were made in the 1950s, that unique 'sob' was still there. As to the overall approach, its freedom, sense of spontaneous improvisation and warmth, virtually everything here has a unique and durable charm. This is, first and foremost, playing from the heart. The sonatas include works by Grieg, Fauré and Franck.



8 *Váňa Přihoda*

Paganini's Violin Concerto No 1, etc (1924-26)

Biddulph (M) LAB135 (3/97)

Přihoda's acrobatic rendition of

Paganini's *Nel cor più non mi sento* Variations has to be heard to be believed: it's dazzling! Whether plucked or bowed (or both simultaneously), the playing of Czechoslovakia's best-known pre-war violinist exhibits a level of technical agility that was virtually unmatched by any player of his time. He also had a sweetly beguiling tone, though these primitive recordings (acoustic and early electric) take some getting used to.



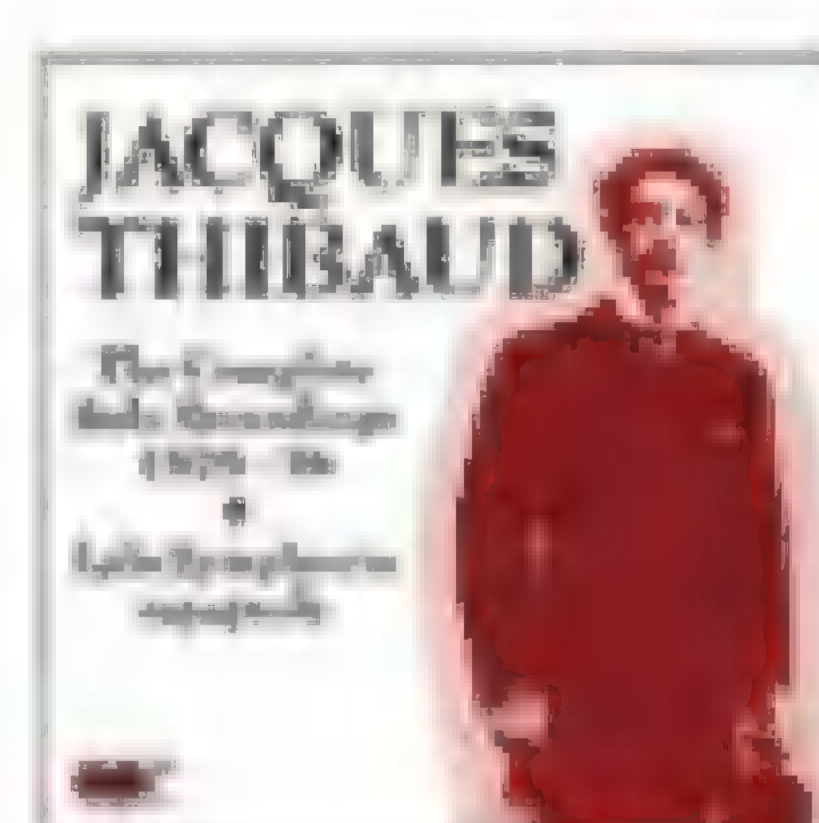
7 *Henri Temianka*

Beethoven's violin sonatas (1946)

Doremi (F) ③ DHR8011/13

Temianka was born in Scotland

to Polish parents and was for a while leader of the Scottish Orchestra, but the greater part of his career was spent in America. These recent first-ever releases are a revelation, Temianka's full, molten tone sometimes fading to a ghostly whisper, while Leonard Shure's lively and intellectually astute piano-playing offers him a credible structural context. Iffy sound, but you'll get used to it.



6 *Jacques Thibaud*

Complete Solo Recordings (1929-36)

APR (F) ② APR7028 (12/94)

To record collectors, best

known for his role in the legendary Thibaud-Casals-Cortot trio, Jacques Thibaud was a true gentleman among violinists, a sort of French Kreisler. His elegant phrasing sported a unique lilt, the kind of playful 'teasing of the line' that only the greatest musicians are capable of. Much of the repertoire here is 'encore' material, highlights including Granados's *Playera* and Saint-Saëns's *Havanaise*.



5 *Zino Francescatti*

Beethoven's Violin Sonatas Nos 7, 8 and 9 (1949-53)

Biddulph (M) 80210-2

Although renowned soloists

in their own right, Zino Francescatti and Robert Casadesu thought and performed as one. These Beethoven sonata recordings combine the grace and expressive generosity of Francescatti's violin with the pianist's disciplined but by no means inflexible approach. They are dramatic, playful and abundantly lyrical. 'Classicism with heart' is how you might put it. Like Přihoda, the French Francescatti was also a pre-eminent interpreter of Paganini.



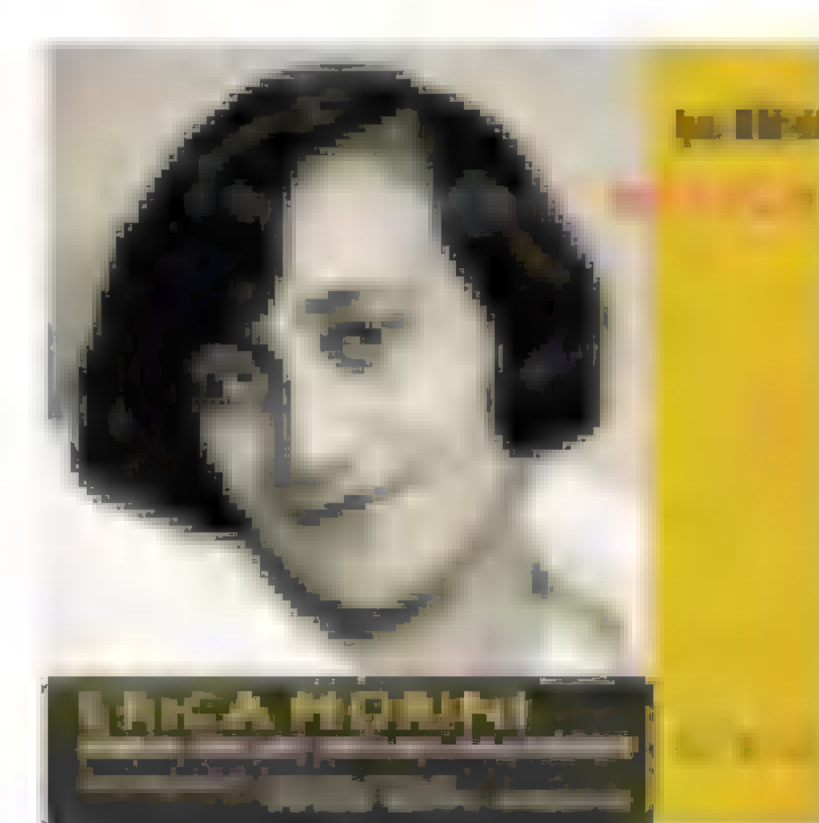
4 *Christian Ferras*

Sonatas and encores (1966-68)

Brilliant Classics (S) ④ 93791

Although he died before he was

50, Ferras had immense promise that was already bearing fruit in numerous concert engagements and distinguished concerto recordings. But perhaps his finest legacy is the series of recordings that he made with pianist Pierre Barbizet, here gracing the pages of the Brahms and Schumann sonatas, as well as sonatas by Franck and Lekeu. Ferras's sound is rich and vibrant, rather like Menuhin's in his youthful prime.



3 *Erica Morini*

Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto, etc (1952)

Audite (F) AUDITE95 606

Morini, Austrian-born but

naturalised American, played under Nikisch at the age of 14. Her view of the Tchaikovsky Concerto combines brilliance with the most exquisite brand of poetry, her tone and phrasing not unlike the great Adolf Busch (who, incidentally, never recorded the work). There are various recordings of the Concerto with her but this has to be the finest, especially as Ferenc Fricsay is alert to her every inflection and gesture.



2 *Joseph Szigeti*

Beethoven and Brahms Violin Concertos (1932)

Pearl (M) GEMMCD9345

Szigeti, who was a friend and

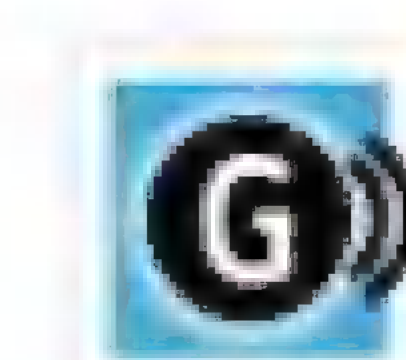
playing partner of Bartók, offers a version of the Brahms concerto that, with its sensuous lines, warmly affectionate phrasing and secure attack of the bow, anticipates parallel qualities in the playing of David Oistrakh. Szigeti's Beethoven is equally persuasive and both performances enjoy stylishly conducted accompaniments, always well paced – though beware the rather sour oboe in the slow movement of the Brahms.

1 *Bronisław Huberman*

Beethoven and Tchaikovsky Violin Concertos (1928 & 1934) Naxos (S) 8 110903 (10/00)



In life as in music, Polish-born Bronisław Huberman was a true original – 'half saint, half gypsy' is how Hans Keller put it. An ardent anti-Nazi and co-founder of the Israel Philharmonic, Huberman played music as he felt it. Try the opening of the Tchaikovsky, initially quiet, then swooping upwards with a marked flourish, a formula that remains intact for the duration. And has anyone ever announced himself so confidently after the opening *tutti* of the Beethoven, climbing impatiently to ethereal heights? Huberman's playing, stylistically old-fashioned, isn't a 'comfortable' listen: he challenges, questions, teases, attacks and contemplates. But if ever a player had something to teach us, Huberman's the one.



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Josquin Desprez

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Bachian philosophy meets Brazilian invention

With his nine *Bachianas Brasileiras*, Villa-Lobos produced a spectrum of works as diverse and colourful as he was – words which also describe well their history on record, finds Villa-Lobos expert **Guy Rickards**

Heitor Villa-Lobos was a larger-than-life character, the familiar image from the 1950s being the avuncular cigar smoker, enjoying and wholly at one with his international celebrity. But Villa-Lobos's career was a mass of contradictions, as tangled and diverse as the rainforests of his native land. Largely self-taught, he became a key figure in Brazilian musical education in the 1930s. He was an incorrigible storyteller, and the tall tales with which he enchanted 1920s Paris relating to his escapades among the natives of the Brazilian hinterland got him into hot water on his return home. So it was with his catalogue of works; Lisa Peppercorn and others have shown that a good number of works were never written, while others magically materialised only when performances were scheduled. Of his 14 claimed operas, only two – *Izabt* (1912-40) and *Yerma* (1955) – actually exist; in the case of *Izabt*, Acts 1 and 2 only appeared for its belated full premiere in January 1940!

COMPOSING THE BACHIANAS

The creation of the nine *Bachianas Brasileiras* is indeed complicated. Composed between 1930 and 1945, they were not created in orderly fashion: four (1, 2, 4 and 5) took years to achieve their familiar forms; three (3, 6 and 9) exist in alternative versions. The First, for eight cellos, was premiered with only the second and third movements (a Prelude and Fugue) in 1932; the Introduction (*Embolada*) – almost all the movements have Bachian/Classical and Brazilian titles – only appeared in 1938, and whether it was composed in 1930 or eight years later for the full premiere cannot be proved (Villa-Lobos was not above misdating his manuscripts). The popular Second *Bachiana* was 'assembled' in 1930 from orchestrations of instrumental pieces from 1917-20. No 4's

opening movements were 'completed' in 1941, three years behind Nos 5 and 6.

Villa-Lobos's expressive purpose is unclear, but he obviously detected a connection between Bachian polyphony and his own fantastical invention, using the one to discipline the other. He felt Bach was 'a universal folkloric source...emanating directly from the people', the music coming 'from the infinity of the stars to infiltrate the earth...Thus the cosmic phenomenon reproduces itself in the soil, dividing itself into different parts of the globe, while tending to become universalised.'

BACHIANA NO 1

for eight cellos (1930; ?extended in 1938)

Villa-Lobos himself set the bar in *Bachiana* No 1 with the **French National Radio cellos** on good form, an account still unsurpassed. This, like **Enrique Bátiz's** three decades later, is a touch sedate compared to others, most particularly the **Berlin Philharmonic's** cello section (scaled up to 12 players). Fast, furious, full of finesse, their whirlwind performance is the best played but too breathless. **Roberto Minczuk's** is about right, likewise the **Yale Cellos**, strong on the impassioned but wayward at times in intonation, a failing repeated by **Conjunto Ibérico** but avoided by the **Pleeth Cello Octet**.

BACHIANA NO 2

for small orchestra (1930)

Villa-Lobos's pioneering *Bachiana* No 2 has also worn well but its more varied textural palette shows up much more vividly in modern recordings. **Minczuk** with the São Paulo SO is perfectly paced, atmospheric and played with winning precision. Although this is an undoubtedly popular score, there are fewer recordings than one might imagine. Years before their present celebrity with Gustavo Dudamel,

the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra recorded it in characterful fashion with **Eduardo Mata**, albeit less secure in intonation and ensemble than their modern successors. The chamber originals have all made their way on to disc: the three cello-and-piano duos most recently by Antonio Meneses and Celina Szrvinsk (Avie), the solo piano prototype of the third movement by Sonia Rubinsky (Naxos).

BACHIANA NO 3

for piano and orchestra (1938)

The Third *Bachiana* stands apart by virtue of its being a hybrid of suite, 19th-century concerto and the chamber concerto form popular in the 1920s. Minczuk's opening (with **Jean Louis Steuermann**) has a real Hindemithian feel; earlier accounts emphasise its romantic character, a trait Villa-Lobos started with **Manoel Braune**. **Felicja Blumental** was much associated with the composer and a live account by her in 1958 accompanied by Filarmonica Triestina under Luigi Toffolo has been issued on CD by Brana. The variable sound and orchestral quality rule this out as a prime recommendation, though it is a spirited performance. **Jorge Federico Osorio** for Bátiz represents the peak of the romantic line, as against Steuermann's neoclassical perspective. All are surpassed by **Cristina Ortiz**, with the New Philharmonia Orchestra in one of Vladimir Ashkenazy's earliest recordings as a conductor, her playing a model of balance between the warm and the cool, the Romantic and the Classical, the Brazilian and the Bachian.

BACHIANA NO 4

for piano (1930-41) or orchestra (1941)

Ortiz's piano original of *Bachiana* No 4 is a leading contender among stiff competition, not least from **Alma Petchersky**. Two finely



PHOTOGRAPHY: STRIAFP/GETTY IMAGES

Composer as storyteller: the flamboyant Villa-Lobos wasn't above misdating his manuscripts and fibbing about when he composed his works

recorded accounts, from Joanna Brzezinska (Claves) and Alfred Hiller (Etcetera), can be rejected for not observing the Prelúdio repeat, thereby compromising the structure. **Deborah Halász** and **Sonia Rubinsky** are strong, the latter rather swift in the Prelúdio (as is Ortiz). **Nelson Freire**'s fine account is available only in a triple-set of Villa-Lobos and Chopin (Warner Classics). **Steuermann**, as mentioned previously, is excellent, his splendidly paced account the finest to hand.

The orchestral *Bachiana* No 4 (orchestrated by the composer himself – the various arrangements by other hands can safely be ignored) has fared well on disc: **Villa-Lobos**'s own account has been intermittently available separately (with No 5) but, despite the opening Prelúdio's intensity, is no longer consistently competitive. Recordings include Barbirolli and the Hallé in 1955 (Barbirolli Society, 10/57), a feisty Robert Whitney in 1977 with the Louisville Orchestra and **Jan Wagner** with the Odense Symphony Orchestra. Wagner elicits fine playing but the tempi in movements one to three are too slow, presumably the rationale for omitting the Prelúdio repeat.

Michael Tilson Thomas (New World SO) follows suit with more panache (albeit milking the intensity a touch artificially), but it is **Minczuk** who makes the best case for omitting the repeat, paced to perfection in itself and the context of the whole. However, **Jesús López-Cobos** and the Cincinnati SO fare best with a wholly superb, full interpretation, gloriously well played and the best balanced account overall.

BACHIANA NO 5

for soprano & eight cellos (1938-45) – first version, Ária only (1938), subsequently arranged for soprano and guitar/piano (1942)
Bachiana No 5 is by some stretch the most popular in concert and on disc, often as a virtuoso vehicle for sopranos, the cellos usually playing second fiddle. The two discs featuring

Annette Céline's recording (on Brana and, remastered rather better, Claudio) do not bother to name the cello ensemble. Céline is Felicja Blumental's daughter so had an impeccable connection to the composer in his last years. A strong singer but with too much vibrato, she sounds a tad croaky in the Dansa. **Victoria de los Angeles** (EMI; also available on Testament) remains iconic if imperfect. Only **Anna Moffo**'s account with Stokowski achieved a similar status. There are too many versions to cover adequately here, so those by Davrath (CBS), Mesplé (EMI), Garrett (Hyperion), Te Kanawa (Decca) and Galante (Campion) are omitted. **Licia Albanese**'s is a strong performance, but the Dansa is too slow (to allow better Brazilian Portuguese diction, perhaps) and she bottles the final note, taking it an octave lower. The final notes of both movements make a good litmus test of the merits of recordings, so **Arleen Auger**, with Yale Cellos, scores high here (though the Ária loses impetus critically in the central episode). **Julianne Banse** with the Berlin Philharmonic cellists produces another beautifully executed performance, her tone finely controlled albeit somewhat 'operatic', not unlike the excellent **Evelyn Lear**. Banse's final flourish does not sound comfortable, whereas Lear nails it. **Jill Gomez** with the Pleeth Cello Octet is polished and well balanced; **Ana Maria Bondi** sounds underpowered in the Ária's close and uneasy in the Dansa's higher registers and quicker speed; her final note is downright shrill.

Reneé Fleming is in superb voice for her account with Tilson Thomas, although her close-out is almost a yell. **Ana María Martínez**'s much-praised account (an Editor's Choice in 2006) is rather even-paced, the Dansa too much so, again to facilitate clearer diction, perhaps, and her final note is also on the shrill side (though not in her YouTube video under Dudamel's direction). A safer recommendation is **Claron McFadden** with Conjunto Ibérico, although some may not like her plummy tone.

Her execution – like that of **Donna Brown** (for Minczuk) and **Barbara Hendricks** (for Bätz) – is excellent. Brown's run-up to the final flourish is very neatly done, and while other singers might outstrip her in this or that passage, the overall package from BIS makes this my overall top recommendation.

Villa-Lobos's arrangement with guitar of the Ária is available from Pia Freund and Timo Korhonen (Ondine). Turibio Santos's version is a reduction for solo guitar (Rob Digital). There are others for flute duet, piano trio and many more.

BACHIANA NO 6

for flute and bassoon (1938)

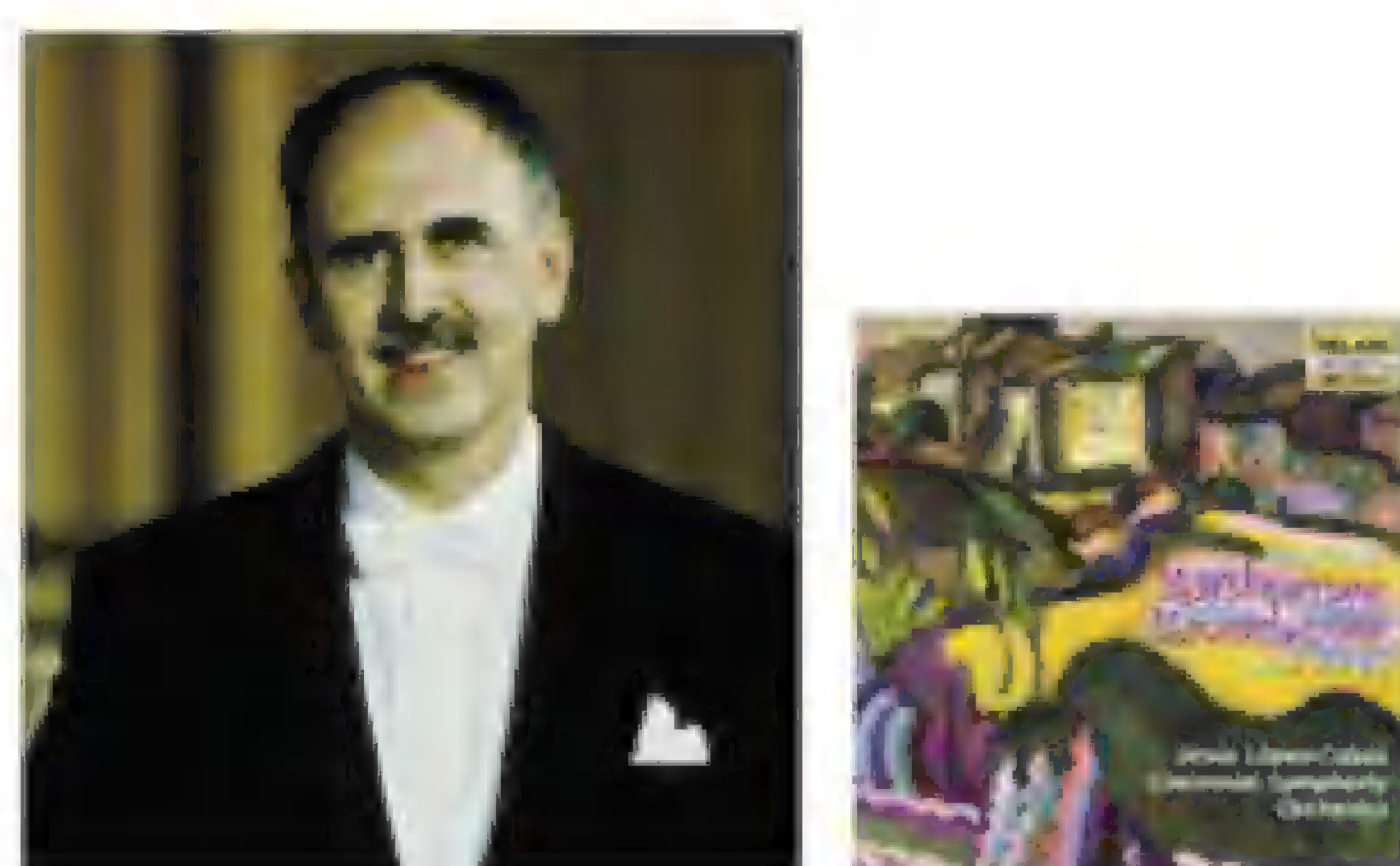
The Sixth *Bachiana* is an enchanting polyphonic diptych. The briefest of the set, it has none the less attracted the attention of many flautists, partnered by eager bassoonist colleagues in a rare chamber-musical outing. Recordings range in length from eight and a half to 11 minutes, enormous variation for a work of this size. **Sato Moughalian** and **Alexandre Silvério** for BIS provide a swift rendition of the Ária but dally rather in the Fantasia; they are comparatively distantly placed, too. I retain fond memories of Michel Debost and André Sennedat for Capolongo, preferable to Ardith Biondi and Donald Johannessen (Etcetera), who are too slow in both movements and run out of steam; the sound is overbright as well. **Andrea Griminelli** and **Rino Vernizzi**, in a similarly constituted programme, are by contrast fleet of tongue and finger, running to under nine minutes – and with good sound. For long my favourite account, **William Bennett** and **Robin O'Neill** give the most refined and cultured performance, but **Emmanuel Pahud** with **Friedrich Edelmann** is hugely impressive and vibrantly fast – 8'37" overall – without ever sounding breathless; Pahud, though, seems a touch forward in comparison with Edelmann.



THE ROMANTIC CHOICE

RPO / **Bätz** EMI © 3 500843-2

Villa-Lobos's music can bear more than one stylistic approach and Bätz makes the finest argument for a full-bodied romantic one. Nowhere is this better exemplified than by Osorio in the piano concerto-like Third, or in the superb No 5 with Barbara Hendricks (pictured).



THE EXPRESSIVE CHOICE

[Nos 2, 4 (orchestral), 8]: Cincinnati SO /

López-Cobos Telarc © CD80393

The Eighth *Bachiana* contains some of the loveliest music of the cycle and in it one perhaps comes closest to Villa-Lobos the human being. Jesús López-Cobos's much-praised account is one of the finest Villa-Lobos recordings in any context.



THE INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE

[No 6]: **Pahud, Edelmann**

Marco Polo © 8 223527

Not all the *Bachianas* involve orchestras and the Sixth's enchanting duo for flute and bassoon is no trifle. For sheer *joie de vivre*, Pahud's recording is electrifying, brimful of technical virtuosity that leaves most rivals for dead.

BACHIANA NO 7 for orchestra (1942)**BACHIANA NO 8 for orchestra (1944)**

Bachianas Nos 7 and 8 have fared poorly on disc by comparison. No 7 is the largest of the series, a gripping four-span suite whose lyrical *Prelúdio (Ponteio)* and dignified closing *Fuga (Conversa)* frame two ebullient inspirations, the *Giga (Quadrilha caipira)* and *Tocata (Desafio)*, the latter of which has an *Andante quasi allegretto* marking that masks a movement of considerable playfulness. **Bátiz's** account remains persuasive despite strong competition from **Minczuk**. However, **Tilson Thomas** is more impressive still, a splendid account catching the serious and skittish sides of this work to a T. The New World Symphony Orchestra's playing is first-rate throughout, Tilson Thomas relishing the outer movements' Bachian aspects. In the *Giga*, the soloists shine as if escapees from an unknown orchestral concerto. Minczuk pushes them close, but Tilson Thomas elicits just that extra smidgen of pizzazz.

The Eighth is the Cinderella of the series. Its four orchestral movements were dedicated to Arminda Neves d'Almeida (aka Mindinha), commonly referred to as Villa-Lobos's second wife, though they never married. The most elusive *Bachiana*, superficially on similar lines to its immediate predecessor, its musical character is more that of a private utterance lacking No 7's extrovert aspect. The emotional heart lies in the second span, *Ária (Modinha)*, one of the loveliest movements in the whole cycle. No 8 has proved to be hugely difficult to 'get right'. The composer's own account in places is a mess; even **Bátiz** runs into trouble. **Minczuk's** is fine, but **López-Cobos** with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra catches the work's elusive beauty more magically.

BACHIANA NO 9**for voices or strings (both 1945)**

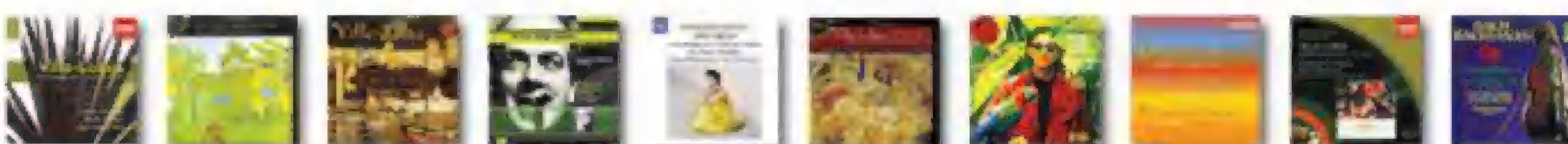
The choral Ninth *Bachiana*, a prelude and fugue (echoing the original format of No 1), is challenging to sing, needing a top-quality choir such as the BBC Singers – and their account under **Odaline de la Martínez** set the benchmark. Strong competition comes later from **Minczuk's** São Paulo SO Choir – around a minute swifter – and, most recently, the SWR Vocal Ensemble Stuttgart conducted by **Marcus Creed**. The diction of Minczuk's and Creed's versions may sound slightly mannered, despite the São Paulo choir's credentials for pronunciation being impeccable; but both are preferable to Sylvain Cambreling's curiously turgid account – especially in the Fugue – with EuropaChorAkademie (Glor Classics). Ultimately, the BBC Singers produce the most convincing account.

The string-orchestral Ninth has had more exposure on disc and proves even more satisfying in this guise. **Villa-Lobos's** nicely



Iconic: Victoria de los Angeles's recording of *Bachiana* No 5 has endured sustained popularity

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

**DATE / ARTISTS****RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)****INDIVIDUAL RECORDINGS**

1954/58	1, 2, 5, 9	De los Angeles; FNRO / Villa-Lobos	EMI (M) 566964-2
1985/86	1, 5	Auger; Yale Cellos	Delos (F) (2) DE3041, DE3712 (oas)
1987	1, 5	Gomez; Pleeth Cello Octet	Hyperion (F) CDA66257 (12/87)
1992	1, 5	McFadden; Conjunto Ibérico	Canal Grande (F) CG9323
2000	1, 5	Banse; 12 Cellists of the BPO	EMI (B) (2) 556981-2 (11/00)
1985/86	1, 5, 7	Hendricks; RPO / Bátiz	EMI (F) 747433-2 (2/87)
1993	2	Simón Bolívar SO, Venezuela / Mata	Dorian (F) DOR90179
1995	2, 4, 8	Cincinnati SO / López-Cobos	Telarc (M) CD80393 (2/96)
1958	3	Blumental; Filarmonica Triestina / Toffolo	Brana (F) BRO001; (S) (5) BRO029
1974	3	Ortiz; New Philharmonia Orch / Ashkenazy	EMI (S) (2) 094703-2
1974	4	Freire	Warner (S) (3) 2564 63676-2
1985	4	Ortiz	Decca (F) 417 650-2DH (12/87 - nla)
1988	4	Petchersky	ASV (F) CDDCA607 (9/88)
1995	4	Halász	BIS (F) BIS-CD712
2004	4	Rubinsky	Naxos (S) 8 555717 (1/05)
2000	4	Odense SO / Wagner	Bridge (F) BRIDGE9129 (11/03)
1996	4, 5, 7, 9	Fleming; New World SO / Tilson Thomas	RCA (F) 09026 68538-2 (3/97)
1951	5	Albanese; 8 Cellos / Stokowski	Testament (M) SBT1414
1960s	5	Lear; cellos / Zillig	VAI (F) VAIA1049; (F) (2) VAIA1245
1964	5	Moffo; American SO / Stokowski	RCA (F) GD87831 (3/97)
1971	5	Bondi; Paris Soloists / Fantapié	Divine Art (M) (2) 21209
1984	5	Céline; ensemble / Shamban	Brana (F) BRO020; Claudio (F) CB4834-2
2000	5	Martínez; Prague Phil / Mercurio	Naxos (S) 8 557827 (3/06)
1987	6	Bennett, O'Neill	Hyperion (B) CDH55057
1988	6	Griminelli, Vernizzi	Arts (B) 47200-2
1993	6	Pahud, Edelmann	Marco Polo (F) 8 223527
1992	9	BBC Sgrs; Lontano / De la Martínez	Lorelt (F) LNT102
2010	9	SWR Vocal Ens. Stuttgart / Creed	Hänssler Classic (F) CD93 268
1995	9	1 Musici, Montreal / Turovsky	Chandos (F) CHAN9434 (5/96)
2002	9	Iruzun; Lontano / De la Martínez	Lorelt (F) LNT115

CYCLES

1954/58	French Nat Rad Orch / Villa-Lobos	EMI (S) (6) 028202-2 (A/11)
1985/87	RPO / Bátiz	EMI (S) (3) 500843-2 (11/87 th)
1987	Brasil SO / Karabtchevsky	Iris (M) (3) 3001 843 (2/02)
2004/05	Nashville SO / Schermerhorn, Mogrelia	Naxos (S) (3) 8 557460/62 (12/05)
2002/06	São Paulo SO / Minczuk	BIS (F) (3) BIS-CD1250, 1400 (2/07), 1410 (12/07) (oas)

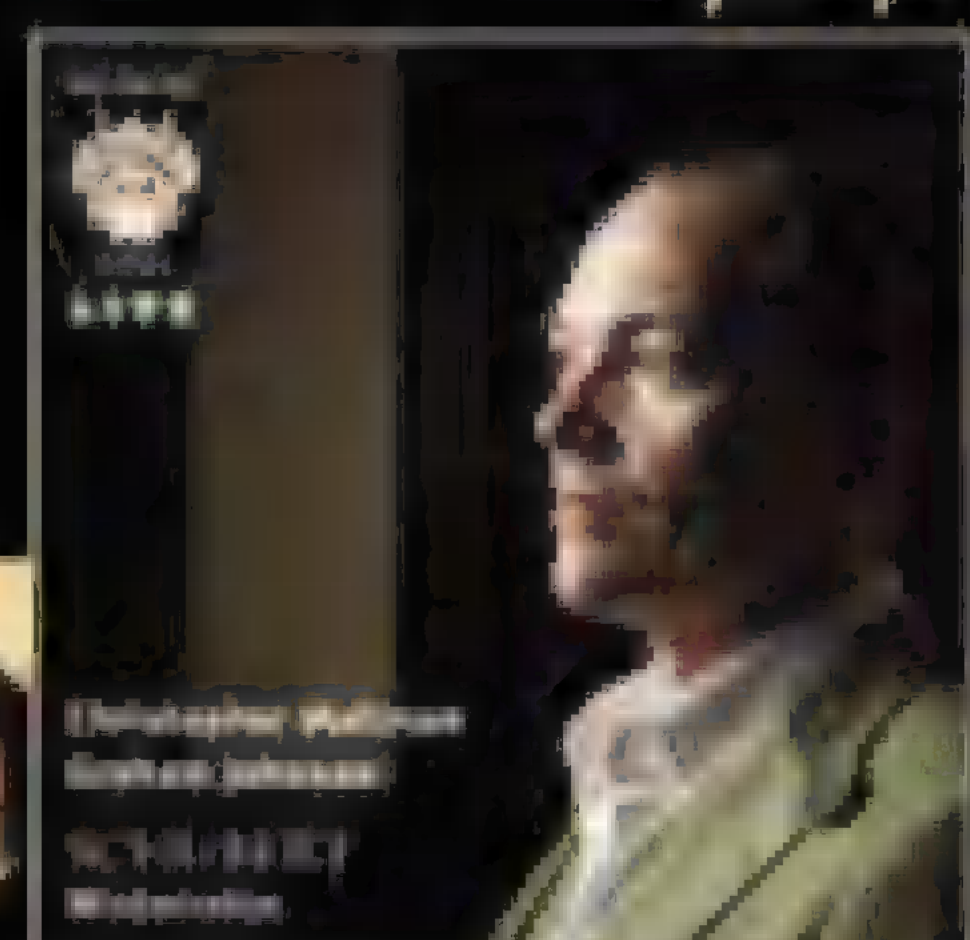
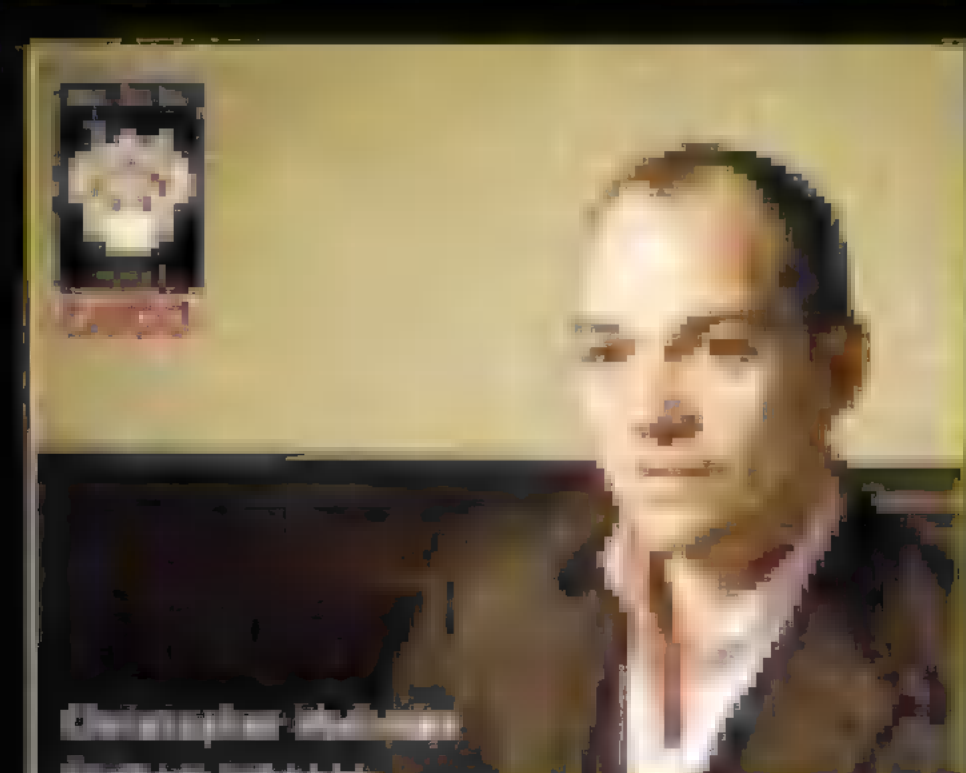


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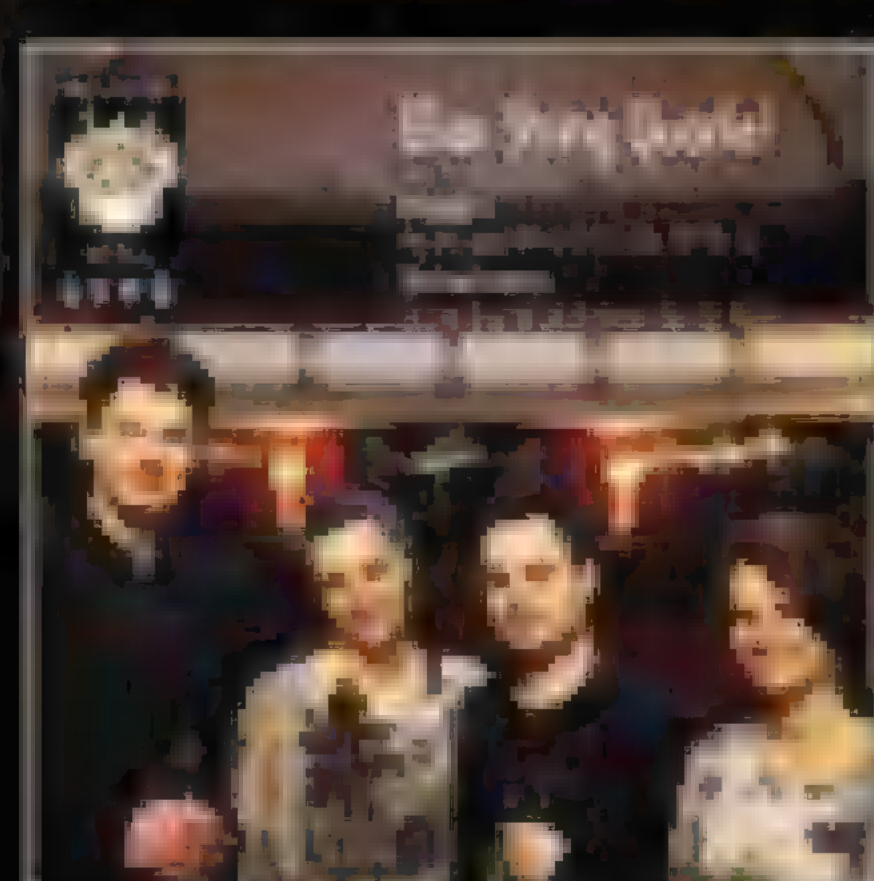
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HAND MADE IN ITALY



Composer as conductor: Villa-Lobos's account of *Bachiana* No 1 in particular remains unsurpassed

phrased recording is one of the most successful of his set. Both **Tilson Thomas** and **Minczuk** benefit from superior sound and finer precision in performance, and their *Bachiana* couplings make attractive programmes. **Odaline de la Martínez** and Lontano catch the essence of the work with a small body of strings, giving the textures a comparatively raw feel. I Musici de Montreal and **Yuli Turovsky** produce a bigger sound in their fine recording but in the end it's the composer's and Minczuk's accounts I return to most often; by dint of his electrifying pace and BIS's spectacular recording, Minczuk's is the front-runner.

COMPLETE CYCLES

There is no complete recorded cycle despite several claims to the contrary, but one does come close. **Villa-Lobos** himself recorded the first complete 'orchestral' series, omitting the piano original of No 4 and choral No 9, for EMI France in the 1950s, recordings recently reissued. From them a subset of Nos 1, 2, 5 – with Victoria de los Angeles in brilliant voice – and 9 has enjoyed sustained popularity, rarely out of the catalogue and ranking as one of the most successful recordings of 20th-century music, though the first Villa-Lobos disc I ever encountered was Paul Capolongo's 1973 EMI LP of Nos 2, 5, 6 and 9. The authority of Villa-Lobos's interpretations is unimpeachable; they remain hugely entertaining and, in places, invaluable, as in the superb swing of No 2 or the unrivalled intensity of the strings in the Prelúdio (*Introdução*) of No 4. However, his technical shortcomings as conductor are apparent throughout, with sections miscued, slack ensemble and wayward intonation. It has

sometimes been suggested that the *Bachianas*, with their slightly ramshackle construction, do not suffer from the odd rough edge in performance, mirroring the rainforests' unruly growth. EMI's second set, with the RPO conducted by **Bátiz** in the 1980s, develops from the success of Barbara Hendricks's recording of No 5 (coupled with Nos 1 and 7) and brings considerably greater refinement to the orchestral textures and the kind of virtuosity missing from the composer's set – albeit that individual recordings by other hands had begun this trend. Despite some rushed tempi, Villa-Lobos's unique sound world ravishes as well as enchants the ear in the hands of **Bátiz**, pianist Jorge Federico Osorio and EMI, a tribute to the excellence of the RPO of the mid-1980s. At this time, **Isaac Karabtchevsky** set down the orchestral *Bachianas* with the Brasil SO for the Iris label (a pointless single disc of excerpts was released in 2007), but despite some impressive soloists – Nelson Freire no less in the Third, Leila Guimarães in No 5 – does not provide consistent competition for **Bátiz**'s set. Iris's sound is not top quality, either.

When **Kenneth Schermerhorn** and the Nashville SO recorded the set for Naxos, only the orchestral versions were presented, as with both EMI sets and that from Karabtchevsky, undermining the claim to completeness. And whereas EMI provide piecemeal fillers in their various incarnations, Iris and Naxos eschew even these. On both sets, some of the performances run well over time, Schermerhorn's No 3 even passing the official longest (No 7) in other sets by more than three minutes. The Nashville SO's playing is solid, in Nos 7-9 pushing the RPO very close. However, the soloists in Nos 3 (José Feghali)



THE OVERALL CHOICE

São Paulo SO / **Roberto Minczuk**
BIS Ⓢ Ⓢ BIS-CD1250, 1400, 1410 (oas)

The precision of ensemble, interpretative clarity and sonic brilliance of Minczuk's recordings would make this a strong contender for the top spot anyway, but the inclusion of alternative versions of Nos 4 and 9 makes this the value-for-money option as well. This is the set to have.



Visit the Gramophone Player at
gramophone.co.uk to hear excerpts
from this month's featured recordings

and 5 (Rosana Lamosa) do not match any of EMI's. Naxos's erratic sound achieves great clarity at times (the piano in No 2's finale) but fails to capture details at others (the bassoon in the preceding movement). **Andrew Mogrelia** was drafted in to set down a fine interpretation of No 1 after Schermerhorn's death, and while the set overall is a fitting tribute to this distinguished conductor, it trails **Bátiz**'s set, lacking its superior sound and orchestral and interpretational finesse.

The only cycle with any real claim to completeness is that from BIS, directed by **Roberto Minczuk** with the São Paulo SO. Its three well-filled discs contain both versions of Nos 4 and 9, and omit only the voice-and-guitar/piano arrangements of No 5's celebrated Aria – so there are 11 *Bachianas* instead of nine. The orchestral playing is beautifully balanced, very refined (proving that this music does not need rough edges) and lean in texture, allowing for greater clarity in the sound and a more neoclassical feel to the interpretations, against other more 'romantic' accounts. Minczuk's overall vision is compelling, BIS's sound the finest of all and the soloists superb. As discussed, Jean Louis Steuermann plays Nos 3 and 4 with great skill, including the repeat in No 4's Prelúdio. And Donna Brown gives Hendricks a run for her money in No 5; the modern recording puts hers ahead of de los Angeles's now.

Bátiz, then, takes the silver-medal position for the 'orchestral' series, his accounts being full of life. But Minczuk's is the only real choice for the complete *Bachianas* – his set, with most alternate versions, is at least a match for its rivals where not demonstrably better, and with finer sound. Ⓢ

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MUSICAL JOURNEYS

Gramophone's monthly search for the best classical music experiences around the world

Music and politics

At age 75, the Israel Philharmonic still courts controversy but, finds **James Inverne**, the music comes first



Pianist Daniil Trifonov appears with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra

More than most, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra has identity issues. In December, at a vast tent erected at the Tel Aviv port, a little way along from where Toscanini conducted its inaugural concert 75 years earlier and while its usual hall is being renovated, the orchestra celebrated its milestone anniversary. And, as a boy's solo voice sang out in Hebrew, I fancied it must be the start of the advertised new work. It took a few seconds for the shekel to drop. The boy was singing the Chanukah blessings as he lit the candles for the Jewish festival. After which the audience, accompanied by Zubin Mehta and the orchestra, sang the anthem *Maoz Tzur*.

How many orchestras, I wondered, would be so ingrained in the culture of their country that a concert would begin as that kind of communal event? For that matter, how many would today be heckled at their London Prom for association with their own nation? Or face an audience among which fists were reportedly flying at an unannounced Wagner encore (a taboo in Israel)? Yet, through it all, the Philharmonic has remained a top-flight orchestra that has evolved musically in interesting ways – and I had intended to write a refreshing piece looking at it purely from the musical standpoint. But not only is the politics never far away, even the musical evolution is inextricably bound up with geographical and cultural events.

Founded by immigrants fleeing Hitler, a European sound gave way to a Russian string-led sound with the wave of Soviet immigration in the 1990s. And now? 'Sound-wise today it has more to do with where players study,' says IPO trumpeter Yigal Meltzer. 'For instance, now many string players study in Europe, many wind players study in the US. Which is why many orchestras sound more alike.'

Although one might expect a band led by the same music director for four decades to be moulded in his image, and long-serving double-bass player Peter Marck concedes that Mehta's sound – 'a big central

European sound' – is second nature, they adapt to the artist. 'We're used to dealing with each other on a very personal level so we relate to soloists in the same way. Last night, when Evgeny Kissin played, the orchestra had a unique sound – very precise but full and thought-out, which is not our usual tone. It was our reaction to him. He plays with a very definite sound for every note.'

For the highly rated young pianist and one of the orchestra's newer guests, Daniil Trifonov, the approach works. 'I was astonished at the fluency of the orchestra's reactions, on the rubato, on the tempo changes. The contact with the soloist is absolute and when I was changing the atmosphere, the orchestra reacted to it.'

On politics, the musicians won't be drawn. Marck cites cellist Steven Isserlis's reaction to the London Prom: 'He made the point that we are a self-governed, democratic orchestra where everybody is free to express himself politically. We all have our own opinions. But we don't bother with politics and no politician has ever tried

'Even the musical evolution is bound up with geographical and cultural events'

to make us puppets.' On the absence of Arab players in the mostly Jewish orchestra he bristles. 'Our auditions are behind screens. The best player gets the job. I don't even like hearing that question. The education department makes a point of working with the exact same proportion of Arab and Jewish children as there are in the population, yes. But in the orchestra it's just a question of who plays best.'

Yet the issue points again to the IPO's conflicted identity. Is it an orchestra in Israel or an orchestra of Israel? For violinist and frequent guest Pinchas Zukerman, that split identity is more opportunity than challenge. Pointing out that Toscanini once took the orchestra to Egypt, he says, 'That was the right idea! And if the Arab states won't have us, we stream our concerts now. An Arabic-language website might create that bridge. It will be an opening we never had before. Things change.' The music comes first, yes. But the politics follow.

An Eastern adventure

Charlotte Smith takes her violin on tour in China

China's burgeoning enthusiasm for classical music has been noted with great interest by a Western music industry faced with the problem of engaging with apathetic, pop-biased audiences. The likes of Lang Lang and Yundi are afforded rock-star status, dedicated music halls are popping up in the most minor of towns and concerts are well attended by excited crowds. The opportunity to witness this for myself was therefore not to be missed when my orchestra, the Kent Sinfonia, was invited on a two-week concert tour of nine Chinese cities.

A country gripped by industrial expansion on a massive scale, China's rapid growth is at spectacular odds with the worldwide

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recession. The skyline is dominated by identical, freshly built tower blocks of flats; express trains power through the countryside connecting brand new cities; and numerous Chinese airlines ferry the well-to-do in comfort. There is little to distinguish Shanghai's high-rises and brand-name shops from any other capitalist centre. Yet the city's riches have yet to be passed to the outer suburbs where relative poverty seems the norm.

Clearly, China's desire to trade with the West, launched in earnest in the 1980s, has led to a gradual influx of Western aspirational culture – and along with KFC, Häagen Dazs and Chanel has come the spread of classical music. But just as the country's growth is a work in progress, so too does the classical revolution – begun only a century ago – remain in its infancy.

The programme requested for our 10-concert tour is chock-full of popular Strauss waltzes, operatic arias and British stalwarts. The

'Along with Western aspirational culture has come the spread of classical music'

encore each evening is that old favourite, the *Radetzky March*, to which the Chinese happily clap along. Concert etiquette leaves much to be desired – eating and talking are common – but we're told that if the audience doesn't walk out they are enjoying our playing.

What's impressive is the size and youthfulness of the crowds. In Shanghai, China's most populated city, one would easily expect to fill a 700-capacity auditorium but the smaller city concert halls – each similar in size and proportion – draw sell-out audiences too. Our performance makes the newspaper in Fuzhou and there is a 25-foot poster advertising our concert outside the hall in Nanning. Prices in Europe far exceed those in China, so it's gratifying to learn

The insider's guide

Gramophone selects March's unmissable musical events

2 Helsinki, Music Centre

The Finnish Radio Symphony conducted by Joshua Weilerstein perform Hillborg's *Four Transitory Worlds*, Dvořák's Eighth Symphony, and Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand with soloist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet. yle.fi

2 London, St Martin-in-the-Fields

The Hera Quartet give a lunchtime performance of Beethoven's Quartet Op 18 No 1 and Schnittke's Third Quartet. smittf.org

3 Rome, Parco della Musica

Janine Jansen joins the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia under Antonio Pappano to perform Brahms's Violin Concerto on March 3, 5 and 6, alongside Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony. santacecilia.it

8 Glasgow, City Halls

Cellist Alban Gerhardt joins the BBC Scottish Symphony under conductor Andrew Manze to perform Britten's *Cello Symphony* alongside Vaughan Williams's Symphony No 6 and works by Purcell. glasgowconcerthalls.com

8 Sydney, Opera House

Opera Australia presents Mozart's *Così fan tutte* throughout March, starring Sharon Prero as Fiordiligi and Sian Pendry as Dorabella. opera-australia.org.au

9 Seoul, Arts Center

Shi-Yeon Sung conducts the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra in Brahms's First Symphony, and Strauss's *Four Last Songs* with soprano Lisa Milne. seoulphil.or.kr

9 Los Angeles, Cello Festival

The Piatigorsky International Cello Festival runs from March 9-18 under the direction of Ralph Kirshbaum and brings together established artists and young musicians for 10 days of performances and masterclasses. Taking part this year are the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Neeme Järvi, Steven Isserlis, Mischa Maisky and Raphael Wallfisch. piatigorskyfestival.com

10 Brighton, Dome

Rui Pinheiro conducts the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in a programme including Sibelius's



Chinese concert venues in Chengdu, Fuzhou and Shanghai

the comparatively high ticket costs aren't affecting attendance. Indeed, the public concerts are much more satisfying affairs than the government or corporate events, for which audience response is lukewarm at best. Our charity performance in Nanchang, where only a few days beforehand Lang Lang had appeared, is an exceptionally warm occasion, demonstrating a real grass-roots enthusiasm for music beneath the pomp and ceremony of state.

How the country will develop over the next 50 years is anyone's guess. Just as industrial growth is so aggressively altering the landscape, so too will outside influences continue to flavour the cultural melting pot – though perhaps not as decisively. China's own music and theatre are rich and mysterious, developed over centuries. That East and West might come together in mutual influence and exchange can only be a positive thing. 6

Finlandia, and Grieg's Piano Concerto with soloist Freddy Kempf. brightondome.org

22 Savannah, Music Festival
The Savannah Music Festival runs from March 22 to April 7 showcasing classical, jazz, blues and gospel music. The classical programme, under the supervision of associate artistic director Daniel Hope, includes performances from the Takács Quartet, Menahem Pressler, David Finckel, Wu Han and the Emerson Quartet. savannahmusicfestival.org

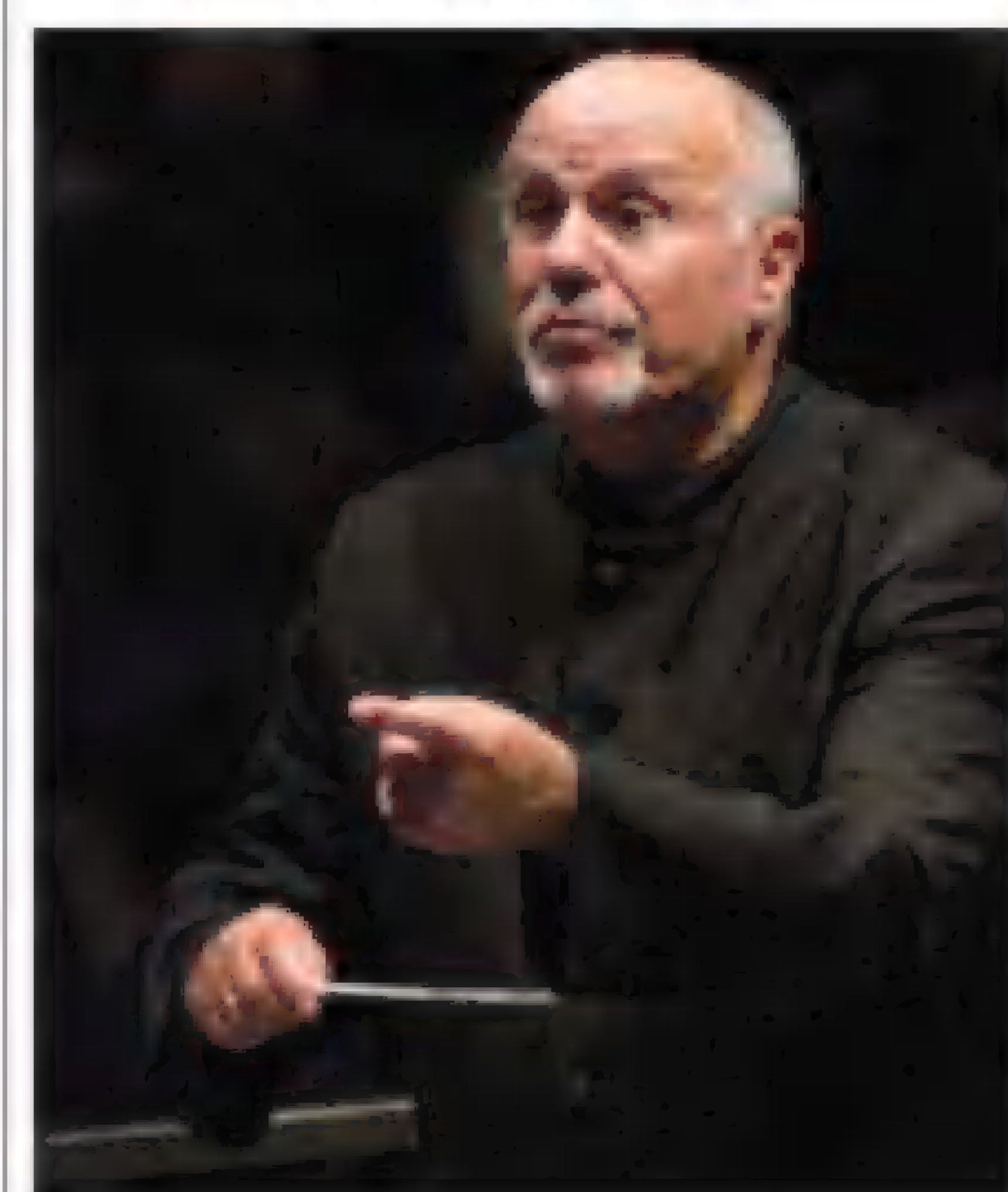
23 Oxford, Sheldonian Theatre
Natalie Clein joins the Oxford Philomusica to perform Saint-Saëns's First Cello Concerto under Marios Papadopoulos. The concert also includes the world premiere of Chris Ferebee's *City of Trees* and Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. oxfordphil.com

30 London, St John's Smith Square
The London Mozart Players conducted by Hilary Davan Wetton perform Mozart's *Prague* Symphony, and Mendelssohn's First Piano Concerto with soloist Cordelia Williams. sjss.org.uk

EVENT OF THE MONTH

1 New York, Avery Fisher Hall

Conductor David Zinman oversees the New York Phil's third annual three-week festival – this time exploring Beethoven's symphonies from a modern perspective. The works are coupled with three 20th-century concertos – Stravinsky's *Capriccio*, Barber's Cello Concerto and Hartmann's *Concerto funebre* performed by Peter Serkin, Alisa Weilerstein and Gil Shaham – each reflecting a different aspect of Beethoven. nyphil.org



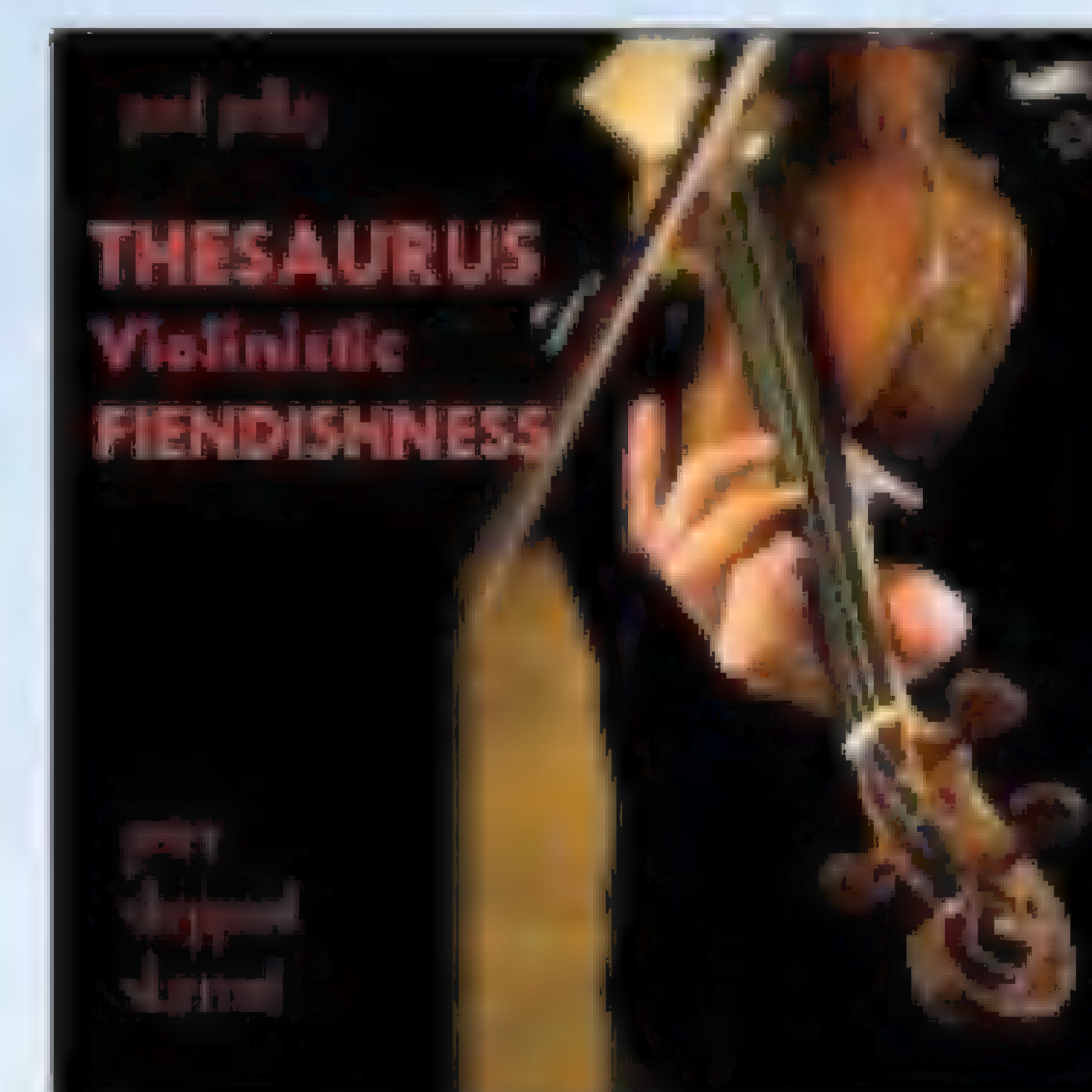
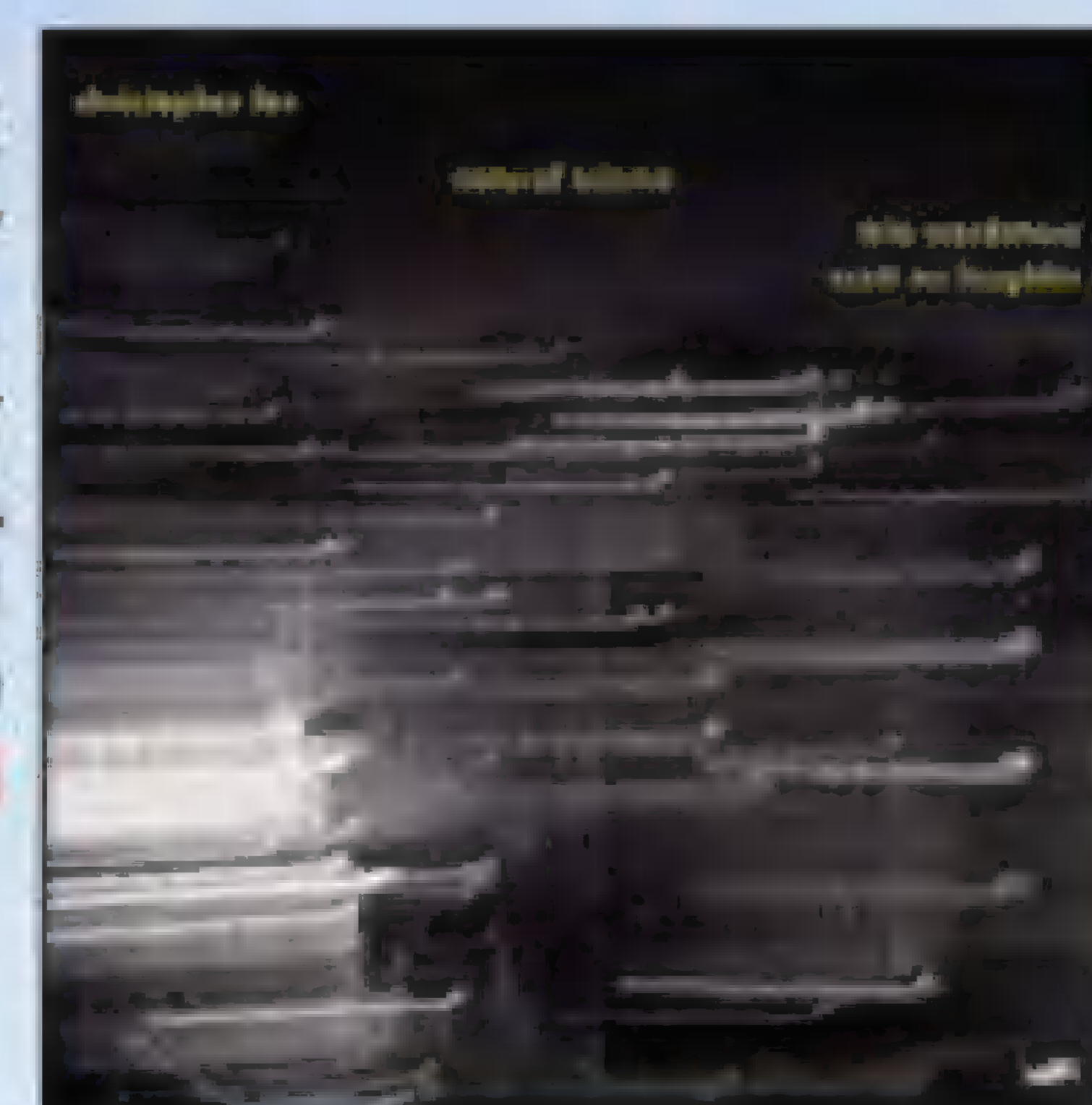
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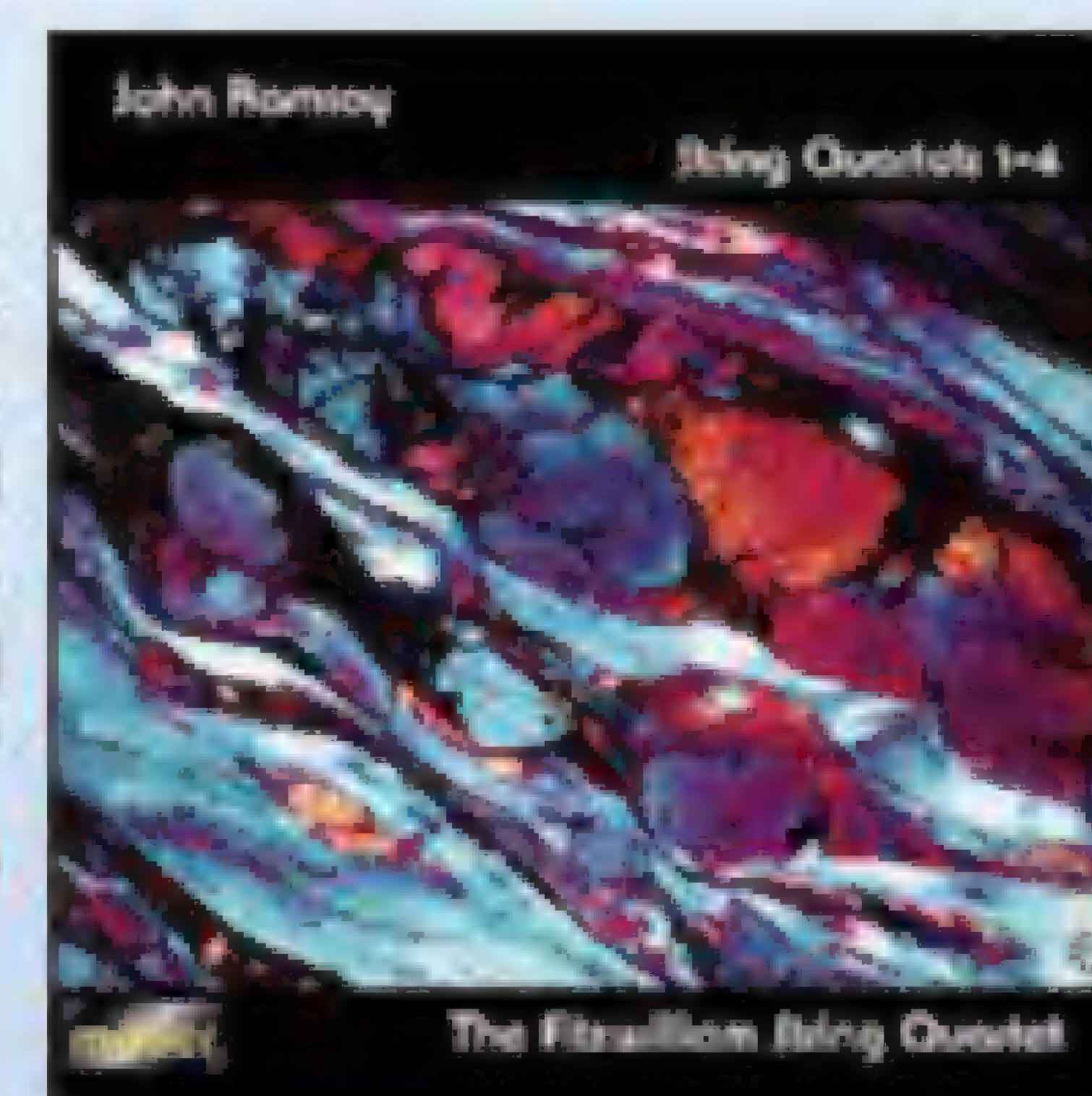
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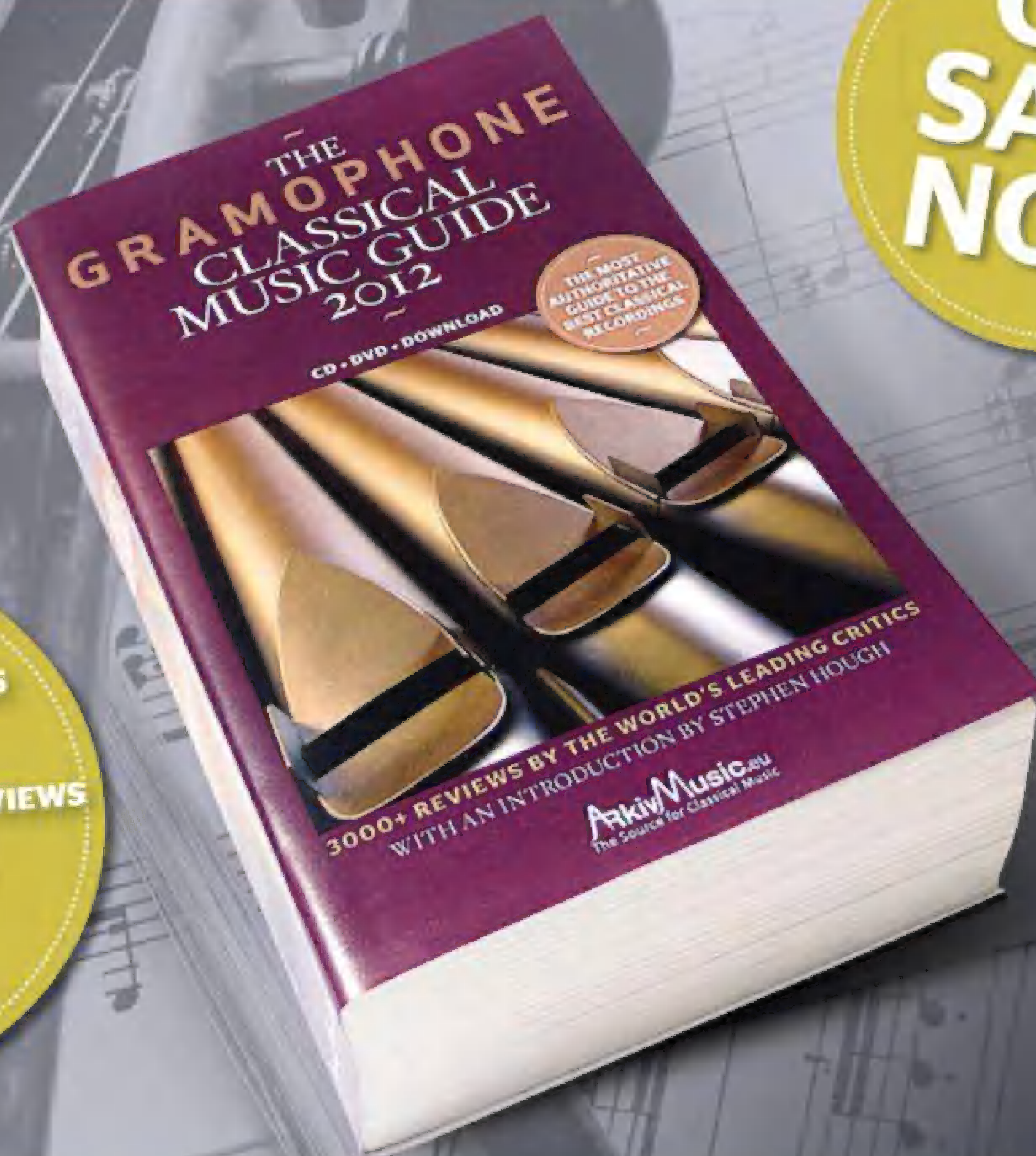
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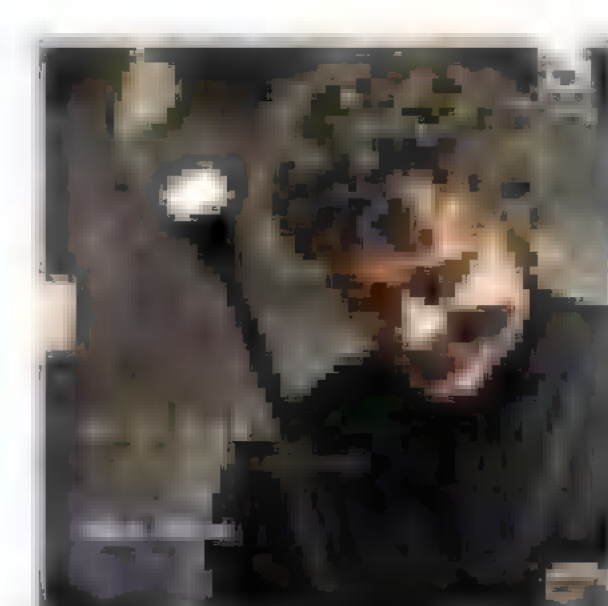
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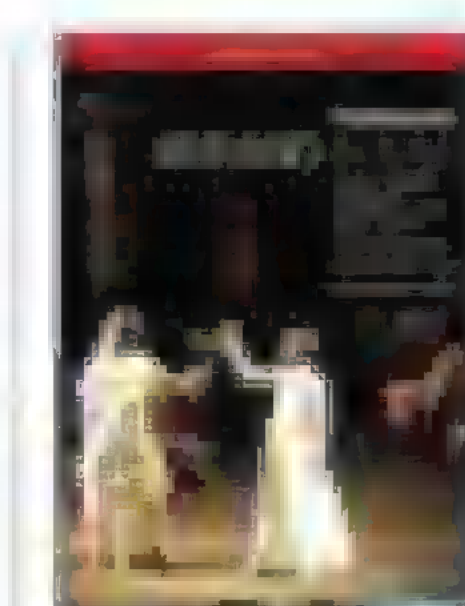
MARCH'S TEST DISCS



Recordings don't have more sense of a live event than this Hyperion set of Havergal Brian's *Gothic* Symphony – but is an applause track of almost nine minutes a bit much?



Paul Lewis's new disc of Schubert on Harmonia Mundi is simply sensational – from the performance to a truly jaw-dropping sound throughout.



Pergolesi's *Adriano in Siria* on Opus Arte: striking singing and playing, beautifully staged and captured to fine effect on this Blu-ray release.

'Headphone sales are booming and the choice of models on the market just keeps on growing'

From swish showrooms to an iPhone studio, **Andrew Everard** says personal audio is here to stay

Headphones account for sales of some £137m in the UK, according to the most recent industry figures. That's 8.75m pairs sold in the UK in a year or an average of 24,000 pairs a day, with sales expected to hit 10m this year. And the choice on the personal audio market – for home use, listening on the move or even making high-quality recordings – just keeps on growing.

A sign of the times is the opening of Audio-Technica's new Paris-Louvre 'concept store' in the rue des Pyramides. The first of its kind in Europe, the new shop showcases everything from the company's high-end

models, including the wood-finished Natural Collection, to mobile phone headsets and DJ headphones. It's all a long way from a few pairs on a rack in the corner of a hi-fi shop!

Headphones come in every size, colour or configuration you could want, from tiny in-ear models to big earmuffs, with or without noise-cancelling to keep the world out and your music in, and with the option of in-line controls to skip tracks, adjust the volume and even answer calls on your mobile phone.

Companies have sprung up selling nothing but headphones: iHeadphones, for example, offers the WeSC Banjo, complete

with that in-line iPhone microphone. Choose from the likes of Hot Orange, Blarney Green or Mauritius Blue if you want to be noticed. The same company also sells the Cresyn C415E, an innovative 'half in-ear' design for those who baulk at earphones built to sit deep within the ear canal. The Klipsch Mode M40 headphones take the active noise-cancelling approach, with a two-way speaker array inside a design made from the kind of materials used for high-end glasses, with leather ear-cups.

And if you can listen in high quality on the move, why not record the same way: pro-audio company Tascam has launched its £85 iM2 stereo microphone and an accompanying recorder 'app', designed to turn an iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch into a portable recording studio. With microphone pre-amp and analogue-to-digital conversion built in, and capable of recording at CD quality, this could be just the thing for the musician on the move with a need to make instant recordings. ⑥



- ① A splash of colour: the **WeSC Banjo** headphones sell for £70 – also available in Blarney Green
- ② **Audio-Technica's** new Paris outlet showcases the company's range for the first time in Europe
- ③ The £20 **Cresyn C415E** is an affordable iPhone upgrade, with a novel 'half in-ear' design
- ④ No noise, plenty of style: the first active noise-cancellers from **Klipsch**, the £300 **Mode M40**
- ⑤ Record as well as you can listen: **Tascam** turns an iPhone into a mobile studio for just £85

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Primare BD32

Possibly the ultimate universal disc player – and more, says **Andrew Everard**

Before you read any further, check the price of the Primare BD32. Yes, that is £3250, and now you're probably experiencing the kind of feeling I had when the initial press release hit my email inbox.

After all – as many will tell you – everything from streamed music to films or concerts on Blu-ray is all about ones and zeros, and thus any piece of equipment designed with any degree of competence will play the material to the same standard. Yet having seen the information on the Primare, I was more than a little fascinated. After all, it will play just about any disc, from Blu-ray to DVD to SACD to CD, and will also play music from external hard drives or – via built-in Ethernet – from a home computer or network-attached storage device. But then so will many players selling for a tenth of its price. Or less.

Of course, we're all aware of how the law of diminishing returns works in consumer electronics, in that you have to spend ever greater amounts to achieve smaller gains in performance: it's (relatively) easy to get the first 80 per cent of the performance right, but each percentage point thereafter is hard-won.

That's what you're (hopefully) paying for in the Primare: a no-compromise player able to handle a wide range of media and formats, and play them to the highest possible standards.

To that end, the Swedish manufacturer takes the basic building blocks of a universal disc player with streaming capability, in this case Oppo's BD-93, and around them designs an audiophile-quality audio player as well as a highly accomplished home cinema machine.

For that reason, this review will concentrate on the BD32's audio performance – take it as read that the Primare is a fine performer when hooked up via HDMI to a suitable AV receiver,



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Audio outputs Balanced stereo on XLR sockets, unbalanced stereo on RCA phono, 7.1-channel analogue, digital out on AES/EBU XLR, optical and electrical S/PDIF, and two HDMI

Video outputs Two HDMI (with 3D capability), component and composite analogue video

Other connections USB, eSATA, Ethernet (Wi-Fi with adapter), RS232 control, 12V trigger in/out, infrared remote in/out

Accessories supplied Remote handset

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and capable of smooth, stable 3D performance, as well as playing standard Blu-ray discs and DVD video titles extremely well.

However, the meat on the bones here is the work Primare has done on the audio performance of the player, the use of custom-engineered power supplies (for video and audio), and the addition of a better user interface and enhanced control and input options to suit the enthusiast.

The audio section here is able to decode all audio formats without an intermediate conversion stage, including Dolby TrueHD,

DTS Master HD and – most significantly – the DSD format at the heart of Super Audio CD.

Stereo output uses Crystal's top-end CS4398 DSD digital to analogue conversion, with separate circuitry for the balanced stereo output on XLRs and the conventional single-ended phono outputs, plus a dedicated relay-controlled filter path for DSD.

A standalone multichannel output stage is used to feed the 7.1-channel analogue outputs, using a Crystal CS4382A DSD DAC chipset, and both stereo and multichannel sections use Burr-Brown op-amps, audiophile



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quality capacitors and resistors, local voltage regulation and relay-controlled muting – all for the lowest noise and the best sound.

The BD32 has two main power supply sections: one for operational power, the other for standby, the latter switching off when the player is being used. The main PSU uses an entirely linear design, with separate windings on the main transformer feeding the analogue

player more than capable of holding its own against the very best dedicated SACD and CD hardware, and requiring no allowances to be made for the wide range of material it can handle.

That's as true when playing music from an external drive, or streaming from a network: the Primare is dependent on the quality of the files it's playing, and thrives on

'This is a player capable of thunderous bass, allied to as much agility and low-end speed as anyone could ever want'

and digital power supply circuits mounted on opposite sides of the player. The entire chassis of the player is used to disperse the heat generated by the power supplies.

PERFORMANCE

It's a chunky piece of equipment, built in cool metal in that very Scandinavian, very Primare fashion. And while it's neither huge nor especially heavy, it feels both reassuringly solid when unboxed and nicely planted – on its three feet – when installed.

And where it counts – on sound quality – the Primare has everything going for it, whether one plays concert or opera Blu-ray discs with DTS-HD or Dolby HD soundtracks, one of the growing range of audio-only Blu-ray discs, SACD titles or even CDs.

This is a player capable of thunderous bass weight allied to as much agility and low-end speed as anyone could ever want, a treble fully able to make the most of the extended frequency range available on higher-resolution discs without ever becoming hard or strained, and the most appealing midband, combining expression and openness with a beautifully natural flow. Put simply, this is a multiformat

higher-resolution FLAC or WAV, but it's not too hard on low-bitrate MP3s.

If you're just going to use it connected to an AV receiver via an HDMI cable, then on to a display using the receiver's monitor output, you could just be wasting your money on the BD32: to make the most of this player, you have to use its onboard decoding, digital-to-analogue conversion and analogue output stages, into a stereo amplifier of very high quality, or AV amplification with multichannel analogue inputs. For most of this review I used my old, but still excellent TAG McLaren Audio AV32Rbp-192 processor, which has analogue bypass inputs, and the TMA 100x5R:10 power amplifier. By dint of its age it's now a 100X5R:9, but still sounds wonderful with so accomplished a source.

The BD32 is by no means a mass-market product, and I expect relatively small numbers of this unit will be sold to high-end audio/video enthusiasts willing to invest in the rest of the system required to justify buying so accomplished a player. But that shouldn't detract from what is a remarkable effort by the Primare team in creating one of the very best disc players on the market. **G**

DESIGN NOTES

Lars Pedersen

MD, Primare

From traditional music to the role of stereo in a multimedia world



Lars Pedersen has run Primare since 1996, when he took over the company and moved it to Sweden. He's still heavily involved in the design of all of its products, and can trace his earliest musical influences back to traditional music at school when he was learning to dance at the age of six.

Then came pop music on the radio, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, while one of his most memorable musical experiences was Jimi Hendrix at the Tivoli Concert Hall in Copenhagen. When asked about his favourite classical music and composers, the answer is unequivocal – 'Mahler 2'.

Classical music plays a major part in the tuning and design of the company's products – 'Bruckner's Symphony No 9 from Skowaczewski and the Minnesota Orchestra, and Varujan Kojian and the Utah SO's recording of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* spring to mind' – though Pedersen says team design means everything from jazz to hard rock is used.

He enjoys the experience of music on Blu-ray, saying that 'today's multichannel can liberate the space and acoustic of a live recording like no other source'.

But stereo quality is vital to products such as the BD32: 'It's a Primare universal player not just because it can play all discs, but because we think it plays them at a universally refined level.'

'Team design means that everything from classical to jazz and hard rock is used'

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● REVIEW ACOUSTIC ENERGY REFERENCE 1

Loudspeaker company goes back to its roots

Drawing on the classic AE1 design, this is a superb luxury monitor, says **James Vesey**

The past few months have been a vintage time for high-quality smaller loudspeakers, and here we have an all-new design drawing on the thinking behind one of the most desirable British loudspeakers of the past three decades.

The new Reference 1 model from Acoustic Energy can trace its lineage all the way back to the company's AE1 of the late 1980s, and sees the company using the latest materials and design ideas to advance the AE1 concept as far as possible. So while some things are familiar in the Reference 1, such as the use of the company's metal alloy mid/bass drivers and Ring Radiator tweeter, much has been done to refine the speaker throughout, from cabinets to crossovers and drivers.

At £1495 a pair, the Reference 1 is the smaller of two new standmount designs, the larger Reference 2, at £1895/pr, doubling up on the mid/bass units. Both speakers can be used with dedicated stands, at £295/pr, these having an insert panel of Macassar Ebony veneer to match the speakers.

The original AE1s used heavy metal plates inside the cabinets to provide damping; the Reference goes for a more high-tech solution, in which an MDF/rubber/MDF laminate 'sandwich' is used to create what is effectively a cabinet floating within a cabinet. In addition, X-section bracing bars inside the inner enclosure stiffen the construction and break up internal reflections.

The tweeter has been upgraded in association with manufacturer Vifa and is mounted in Acoustic Energy's DXT 'lens' surround to improve its in-room response and match its dispersion to that of the 11cm twin-voice-coil mid/bass unit, designed for maximum linear accuracy and control.



ACOUSTIC ENERGY REFERENCE 1 STANDMOUNT SPEAKERS

Price £1495/pr

Drive units Ring Radiator tweeter, 11cm alloy-woofer

Cabinet MDF/rubber laminate, sealed box, finished in piano-lacquered Macassar Ebony veneer

Crossover Straight-path second-order, transformer-matching for tweeter, 2kHz crossover point, single-wired WBT terminals

Sensitivity 87dB/1W/1m

Impedance 6 ohms nominal

Accessories Matching stands, £295/pr

Dimensions (HxWxD) 31x19x280cm

acoustic-energy.co.uk

Finally, the crossover is a simple design, 'handing over' between the drivers at 2kHz and with the shortest possible signal paths.

PERFORMANCE

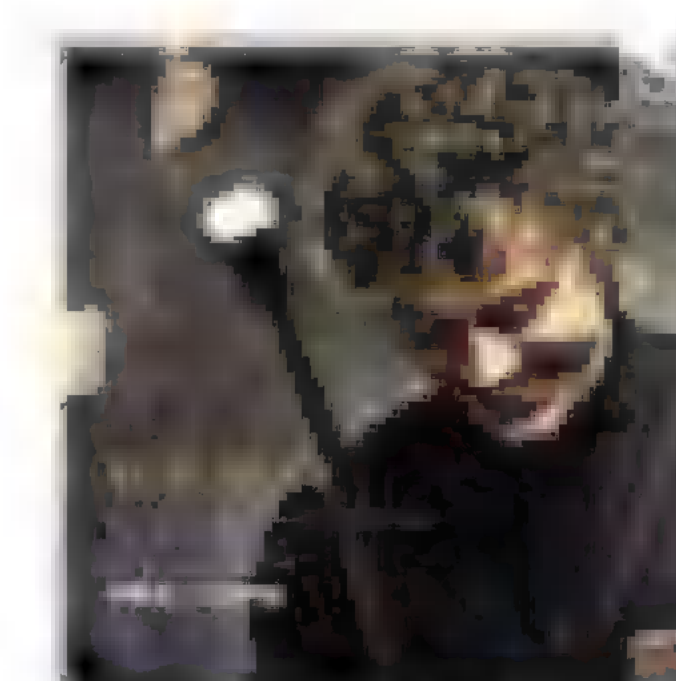
Unbox the Reference 1s, and the quality of the piano-gloss finish and cabinet construction is as reassuring as the weight of the speakers. They may stand just 31cm tall, but the speakers are 10.5kg apiece and sit solidly and squarely on the dedicated stands. The sealed enclosure makes them flexible when it comes to positioning: a bit of space from side and rear walls, and a very slight toe-in, gave the best balance between bass weight and speed, focus and sound stage size.

And what bass! These little speakers have no shortage of weight, even when playing large-scale orchestral music, and don't need to be worked hard to find their low-end extension: they have both solidity and agility down in the lower frequencies, and when you raise the levels a little they retain all that and add the kind of slam that makes orchestral percussion truly exciting.

There's excellent integration between the drive units, and smoothness and imaging is

retained even when one listens off-axis, all the way up into a treble that's as open as it is sweet and refined. Even with recordings mixed to sound 'exciting' – fortunately less common in the classical sphere than the rock and pop worlds – the Reference 1s retain their composure, rather than letting rip with the 'take no prisoners' stuff.

For use in small-to-medium-size rooms, it's hard to imagine many speakers bettering these new Acoustic Energies: all that background and development has clearly paid off in a design that sounds every bit as sophisticated as it looks. If you're in the market for a top-notch pair of speakers in a compact form, look no further. **G**



HOW TO TEST...

With a speaker as beautifully open yet refined as this, it's worth having an audition with a disc really able to put it through its paces. The fabulous instrumental tone and focus of Paul Lewis's lovely set of Schubert piano works (February's Recording of the Month) proves an ideal choice.

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Store

● ESSAY

storemags

'A good local hi-fi and/or home cinema retailer is a major benefit when buying a first system or upgrading – use it or lose it...'

The trend's away from high streets to online, and specialist retail's having a tough time, but **Andrew Everard** says you can't beat the ability to try before you buy

Back in the dim and distant past, when I was freelancing for a number of audio publications, one of my tasks was to write reviews of hi-fi shops. Jump in the car, visit a dozen or so outlets in an area over a few days, produce a regional review supplement to give readers a 'where to buy' guide: which shops sold what, how good their demonstration facilities were and so on.

In those innocent pre-internet days, before all such information was available at the click of a mouse or the stab of a finger, nothing could have seemed simpler. Except that more than a few retailers seemed to take exception to being reviewed in this manner and many viewed any magazine not fawning over the brands they stocked as the enemy, and increasingly I was denied access to the shops or simply shown the door.

For all that, I like good hi-fi and home cinema shops, not least because, as a reviewer with getting on for three decades of writing about consumer electronics behind me, they take some of the pressure off my shoulders. In a world where decent retailers with adequate demonstration facilities no longer exist, and consumers buy 'blind' (or unheard) online based on what they can read, the review – be it in a publication such as this or an anonymous 'consumer review' online – is all the customer has to go on. And I am a strong advocate – and always have been – of the mantra that any review is only an opinion, whether it be from a writer with decades of experience or an online contributor of unknown background, allegiance or origin.

If you're going to buy, whether a first system for a few hundred pounds or spending thousands on an upgrade, there's no substitute for a good local retailer as a place where you can listen to a range of equipment, form some opinions and decide the combination

'There's no substitute for somewhere you can listen, form some opinions and decide what equipment is best suited to your needs'



Not all shops have this range(!), but the best can help explore options and find the right components for you

of equipment best suited to you. As with any specialist interest – hi-fi, railway modelling, fishing, whatever – finding an enthusiastic local retailer and forming a working relationship can be hugely advantageous.

Quite apart from anything else, you can't listen online to your shortlist of products. It's hard to form a relationship with an anonymous retail site – however hard Amazon's automated systems, for example, will try to learn what you've bought or looked at and make further recommendations, it's not the same thing at all – and popping back to a website for a spot of advice on how to make the most of something you've bought is likely to be at best a frustrating experience.

Of course, it must be a two-way street, and in the past specialist hi-fi shops have gained a reputation as daunting places for the newcomer to visit – that *Not the Nine O'Clock News* 'A gramophone, grandad?' sketch may be 30 years old but its influence lingers on – not to mention temples of certain brands, which would be pushed to the exclusion of all others as The One True Way. Sometimes getting an appointment to listen was difficult

in the extreme, and the session itself could be anything from disdainful to preachy.

Some of the worst offenders have gone by the wayside, along – unfortunately – with some of the very best independents, and although there are still more than a few honourable exceptions, increasingly specialist hi-fi and home cinema is in the hands of groups of stores, to the extent that you can find the same brands in many major cities.

In some circumstances, however, that's no bad thing: chains can afford better staff training, for example. I recently had some dealings with one of those chains once known for 'pile it high and sell it cheap' and was pleasantly surprised with the demonstration facilities, the range and the helpfulness of the staff. Take a bow, Richer Sounds, Reading...

Whether it's part of a chain or one of the last hold-out independents, a good retailer is a huge asset when it comes to hearing a range of equipment and making the kind of informed choice that's impossible to achieve by simply reading reviews then buying cheaply online. Use your local retailer or you run the risk of finding it's not there next time you want that vital accessory or just some advice. **G**

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NOTES & LETTERS

Gothic and gigantic • More Faust to be heard • Did Franck approve?

Mahler's authentic Eighth?

In his contribution to the *Gramophone* Team Highlights of 2011 (January, page 37), David Threasher states that Mahler's Eighth is a 'minnow' compared with Havergal Brian's *Gothic* Symphony. This is only because modern performances of the Mahler invariably shrink it into concert halls that are far too small for it. Yet on the two occasions Mahler conducted his symphony, it was with about 1030 performers (hence its unofficial title of *Symphony of a Thousand*). If the 'authentic' sense of scale that has characterised Baroque music practice during the past 40 or so years were ever to be extended to Mahler's Eighth, then it would necessarily be performed with about the same number of performers as the Brian. Instead, and as your photo of the recent Leipzig Gewandhaus performance on page 71 of the same issue demonstrates, today Mahler's Eighth can be performed with as few as 412 musicians, or less than half the number that Mahler definitively established were required for the work. Naturally the reason that Mahler's wishes are regularly ignored has to do with money, while the reason the money was found for the 2011 Proms performance of the Brian clearly has to do with intrigue as to what the work might sound like in the flesh, and the hope that springs eternal in the British psyche that a native composer might have produced a masterpiece that has gone unrecognised by the world. Alas, the Proms performance proved that not to be the case. That is why Havergal Brian's *Gothic* Symphony will probably not be played again until several more generations have passed, unlike Mahler's Eighth, which will go on being regularly performed, albeit only as chamber music.

Eric Shanes

Acton, London, UK

Boult was no Busoni butcher

Can I confirm John Busbridge's assertion (Letters, January) that Boult's 1959 RFH *Doktor Faust* did indeed contain considerably more music than appears on the LPO CD? I have acetates of the original broadcast as made by the redoubtable WH Troutbeck and these play for over two hours – 48 minutes' more music. He is quite correct over the three sections

Letter of the Month



Julius Katchen in 1953 – and see the review of his Brahms, Chopin and Liszt on page 42

Bartók discovered in Dublin

I was fascinated to read Rob Cowan's experiences with Bartók (January, page 30). My own lightning bolt happened when I was a schoolboy of 12 in Dublin. My younger brother and I had the great good fortune to have as piano teacher Dorothy Pye (mother of the Irish artist Patrick Pye). She taught piano at our school under sufferance from an unsympathetic headmaster. But at weekends we sometimes visited her at home in Templeogue. Here she introduced us to Bartók. I have never forgotten the wonder of hearing the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, particularly the second and third movements, in some early '50s recording (I think on the Capitol label). She always referred to it simply as 'Bartók's *Music For*'. Bartók in Dublin in the early '50s was pretty much unknown and certainly unheard. We were enormously impressed that she had borrowed rare library scores of some of the quartets and transcribed them by hand. Later at university I picked

up LPs of much of his music, the Végh version of the quartets, the Violin Concerto played by Max Rostal, Andor Földes's recordings of the piano music, etc. The Fricsay version of the Divertimento became a great favourite of my friends, and could often be heard echoing round the quad through my window. My own obsession at the time was a wonderful Decca recording of the Third Piano Concerto by Julius Katchen with Ansermet. (I was delighted to see in the Philharmonia's 'Infernal Dance' programme that an Australian company had reissued it at last, as my two LP copies were now unplayable). As a student I was walking down a street one day, whistling the third movement of that concerto, when a student in front of me stopped in his tracks and turned round with tears streaming down his face. He was a young Hungarian, and this was a couple of years after the crushed 1956 Hungarian revolution.

Patrick Cuming

Wraybury, Berks, UK

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omitted. So while Boult did indeed sanction a partial abridgement for concert use – quite understandable in the circumstances – he wasn't quite the butcher that the LPO CD seems to present him as. A shame that they didn't feel able to extend to a second CD to include it all! Boult was a great champion of Busoni and other surviving archive recordings include the Violin Concerto (Raskin/BBC SO, 1947) as well as the *Lustspiel* Overture and *Tanz-Walzer*.

David Lardi

Bounds Green, London, UK

Nielsen needs time

Like Andrew Mellor (Musical Journeys, February, page 105), I also attended Colin Davis's concert at the Barbican in December expecting to hear some outstanding Nielsen and equally, I too was very disappointed in the performance. I thought the symphony was too hard-driven and needed time to relax into the true Nielsen idiom; however, reading post-concert reviews, I began to think that I was at a different concert to the reviewers, or I was just wrong. All those that I read thought it to be an outstanding performance whereas, unlike me, they disliked his Haydn. Mitsuko Uchida's performance of Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto was also praised to the heights; I thought it only average, but that is another story. Thank you, Mr Mellor, for renewing my faith in my musical appreciation. I only wish that I had been at the Birmingham concert now!

Robin Self

Framlingham, Suffolk, UK

Franck exchanges

'Franck himself approved of the cello arrangement of his Violin Sonata made by Jules Delsart,' Edward Greenfield says in his review of Alexander Kniazev's new recording (January, page 55). This is a claim often made by cellists, but can anyone come up with any evidence for it? Delsart certainly knew Franck: he took part in the premiere of his Piano Quintet. But, according to Robin Stowell in *The Cambridge Companion to the Cello*, Delsart's transcription of the Sonata was published only 'c1906' – a decade and a half after Franck's death.

Anthony Burton

East Barnet, London, UK

London label-change

Andrew Achenbach (January, page 52) reviews Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony* and mentions the classic 1957 recording by Sir John Barbirolli. He states that it is available on Dutton CDSJB1021.

I should point out that the Dutton CD has been deleted. However, VW's *A London Symphony* and Symphony No 8 are now available on the Barbirolli Society label, SJB1021.

Paul Brooks

Vice Chairman, The Barbirolli Society

Serebrier's Dvořák

The recording of Dvořák's Seventh Symphony made last September by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (In the Studio, December, page 64) was conducted by José Serebrier and was for Warner Classics, not for Onyx. It is part of a Dvořák series: the Ninth Symphony is already available; finished CDs of the Seventh are now ready. The plans are to record Dvořák's Third and Sixth Symphonies in May this year and the Eighth later in the year.

Stefan Bown

General Manager, Warner Classics & Jazz

Editorial notes

An editorial error inadvertently altered the Columbia Graphophone Company to the Columbia Gramophone Company, when referring to the merger in 1931 which led to the creation of EMI (News Analysis, January, page 12).

Incorrect information supplied by a picture library led us to caption a picture as Stravinsky with John McClure, when the composer was in fact in discussion with the pianist Philippe Entremont (Letters, February).

Limpsfield, Delius's final resting place, is in Surrey, not Sussex (Cover Story, February, page 33).

We mistakenly used a picture of Georgina Dobrée instead of Thea King (Collection, February, page 100).

NEXT MONTH

Gramophone talks to Sir Harrison Birtwistle, John Adams and Eric Whitacre and focuses on these three differing areas of contemporary music

PLUS

In The Gramophone Collection, Richard Osborne searches for an ideal recording of Brahms's Third Symphony

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Born May 30, 1928

Died January 16, 2012

As well as being a keyboard player of rare distinction, Gustav Leonhardt was also celebrated as a conductor, teacher and scholar. He studied in Basle at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, working with Eduard Müller for the harpsichord and organ. He later moved to Vienna and started to make a name for himself as a harpsichordist. He was appointed professor of harpsichord at the Academy of Music there before returning to his native Amsterdam to take up a similar role at the Amsterdam Conservatory. He was a pioneering recording artist – the early 1950s saw major first recordings from him of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and *The Art of Fugue*.

The 1950s saw him founding the Leonhardt Baroque Ensemble, which numbered among its ranks some of the major players in the early historical performance movement, and working with the English countertenor Alfred Deller (together they recorded Bach's Cantatas Nos 54 and 170). Leonhardt and the ensemble would later go on to participate in the Bach cantata series recorded for Telefunken (later Teldec), a project shared with Nikolaus Harnoncourt and his Concentus Musicus Wien. It was a project that would run from 1971 to 1990 and earn them a *Gramophone* Special Achievement Award.

Leonhardt's repertoire ranged from early Elizabethan keyboard music to early Mozart but it was the music of the Baroque that was at the centre of his musical interest. His discography was extensive, comprising about



Gustav Leonhardt: an early music pioneer

150 recordings, including about 70 solo discs, for a range of companies.

Gustav Leonhardt had only last month announced his decision to retire from public performance after a concert in Paris due to ill-health.

ALEXIS WEISSENBERG

Pianist

Born July 26, 1929

Died January 8, 2012

Until a 1966 meeting with Karajan, Alexis Weissenberg's career had languished in the doldrums for the previous decade after an exceptionally promising start. He was born in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1929. In 1944 he and his mother spent three months in a prison camp but escaped via Turkey to Israel. There



Alexis Weissenberg: divided opinion

he studied with pupils of Schnabel and Busoni. Aged 17, he travelled to America, where he had some lessons with Schnabel himself, Wanda Landowska and Olga Samaroff. He won the Leventritt Award, found himself championed by conductors Eugene Ormandy and George Szell, toured South and Central America, and made his recital debut in New York in 1948.

After this sensational early success doubts began to creep in. Weissenberg, adversely affected by too many critical reviews and by management problems, started playing fewer concerts, gradually retiring from the concert circuit to reconsider his art. He became a French citizen and spent much time reading, studying and travelling. A 15-minute film of him performing *Three Movements from Petruska* and the subsequent meeting with Karajan reignited his ambition and confidence. Thereafter, as well as recording for EMI, he also appeared on RCA, DG (discs of Scarlatti and Debussy) and Ermitage.

The best of Weissenberg's recordings (self-selected) can be found on 'Les introuvables de Alexis Weissenberg' (EMI), four discs with *Petrushka* (of course),

miraculously fluent and subtly coloured Variations on 'La Ricordanza' (Czerny), Harold Bauer's arrangement of Franck's organ *Prélude, fugue et variations*, a muscular and underrated Brahms No 1 with Muti as well as Ravel's G major Concerto, Rachmaninov's Third and Prokofiev's Third. **Jeremy Nicholas**

DILYS ELWYN-EDWARDS

Composer

Born August 19, 1918

Died January 13, 2012

Dilys Elwyn-Edwards, who has died aged 93, was the fastidious doyenne of Welsh musicians and the composer of some of the finest songs in the Welsh language. Born in Dolgellau, she was always keen to preserve a sense of enigma about her actual age and partly for this reason forbade any celebrations of her anniversary even when, at 85 in 2003 and later at 90, all the great singers in Wales were anxious and ready to do so. She was nevertheless grateful for any genuine attention paid her and relished an Indian summer of performances by this new generation which included Rebecca Evans, Bryn Terfel, Gwyn Hughes Jones, Rhys Meirion and even the young Charlotte Church.

She studied initially at Cardiff University, where her imagination was fired by a performance of Herbert Howells's *Here is the little door*. Finding any compositional guidance at Cardiff quite stultifying, she fulfilled a dream in moving on to London and Howells himself, who immediately detected a sense of modality in her writing which he thought was somehow Celtic, even if it derived in part from Delius, Warlock and Moeran among others. After a period in Oxford, where she had organ lessons from Sir Thomas Armstrong at Christ Church, she returned to Wales and settled in Caernarfon. Commissions for songs and choral works flowed her way and



Dilys Elwyn-Edwards: song composer extraordinaire

with *Caneuon y Tri Aderyn* ('Songs of the Three Birds') for Kenneth Bowen in 1962 she achieved a classic marriage of words and music in Welsh which has yet to be surpassed. **Geraint Lewis**

MARTIN ISEPP

Pianist

Born September 30, 1920

Died December 26, 2011

Martin Isepp was long associated with Glyndebourne, where he worked with many generations of singers from 1957 until 1978 and then again between 1994 and 2007, first as head of the music staff and later as chief guest coach.

The son of an Austrian émigré artist who came to the UK in 1938, Isepp studied at Lincoln College, Oxford, and then at the Royal College of Music. His mother Helene was a fine singer; she numbered Janet Baker and Heather Harper among her pupils, and Isepp would serve as accompanist. His first professional post was with the English Opera Group at Aldeburgh (where he played the piano part in the premiere of *The Turn of the Screw*) but it was Glyndebourne that dominated his life. In the 1970s he



Martin Isepp: more than just an accompanist

was head of the Juilliard School's Opera Training Department in New York. Also in New York, he was associate conductor at the Metropolitan Opera, during which period he led a couple of much-admired performances of *Così fan tutte*, standing in for an indisposed James Levine. He was also head of music studies at the National Opera Studio from 1978 to 1995, and between 2006 and 2008 was head of music at the Opera Akademie of the Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen.

As an accompanist, Isepp worked with many great singers including Elisabeth Söderström, Janet Baker, Jessye Norman, John Shirley Quirk, Hans Hotter, Frederica von Stade, Hugues Cuénod and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. **James Jolly**

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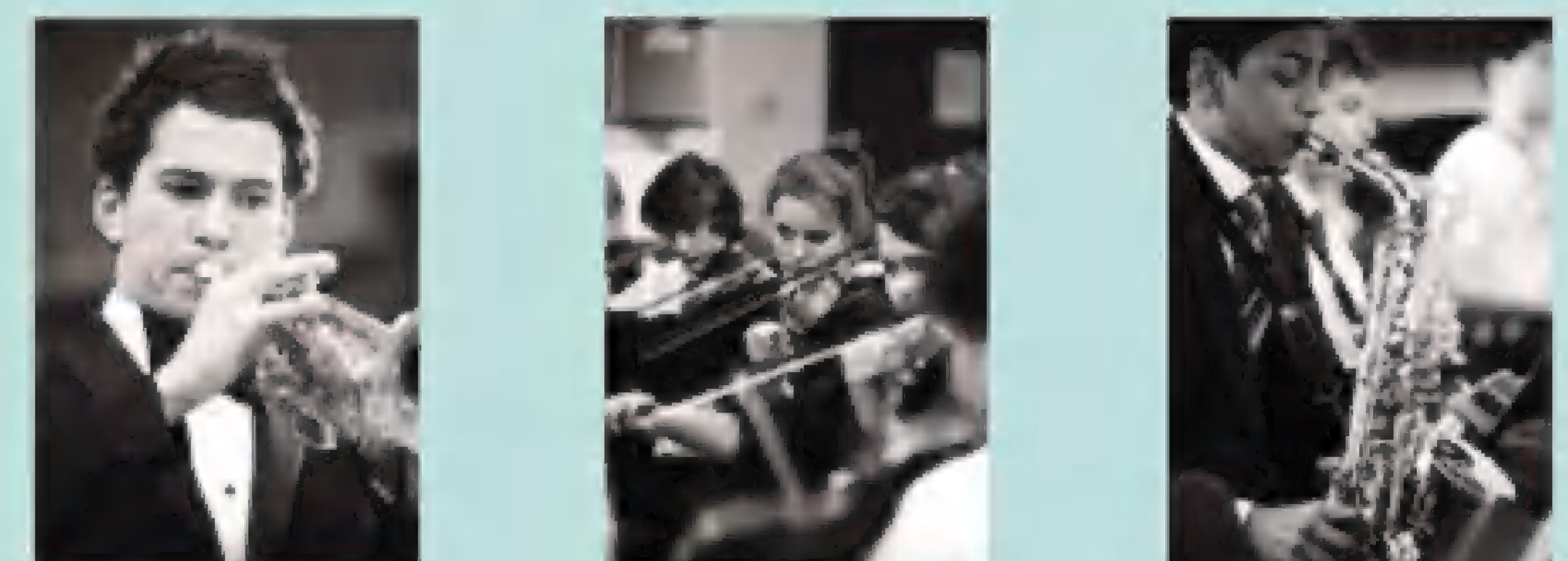
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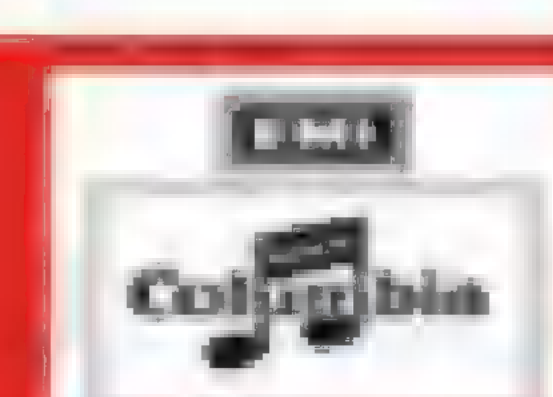
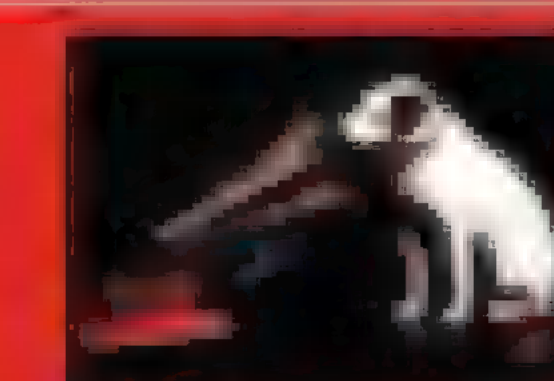
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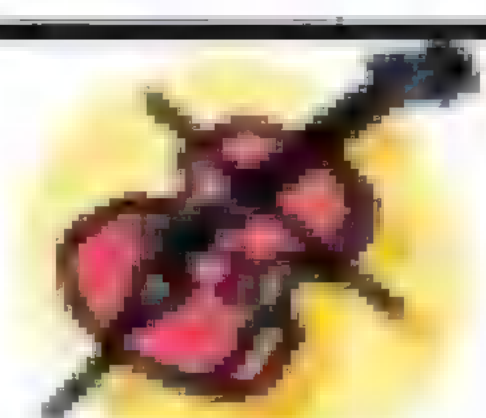
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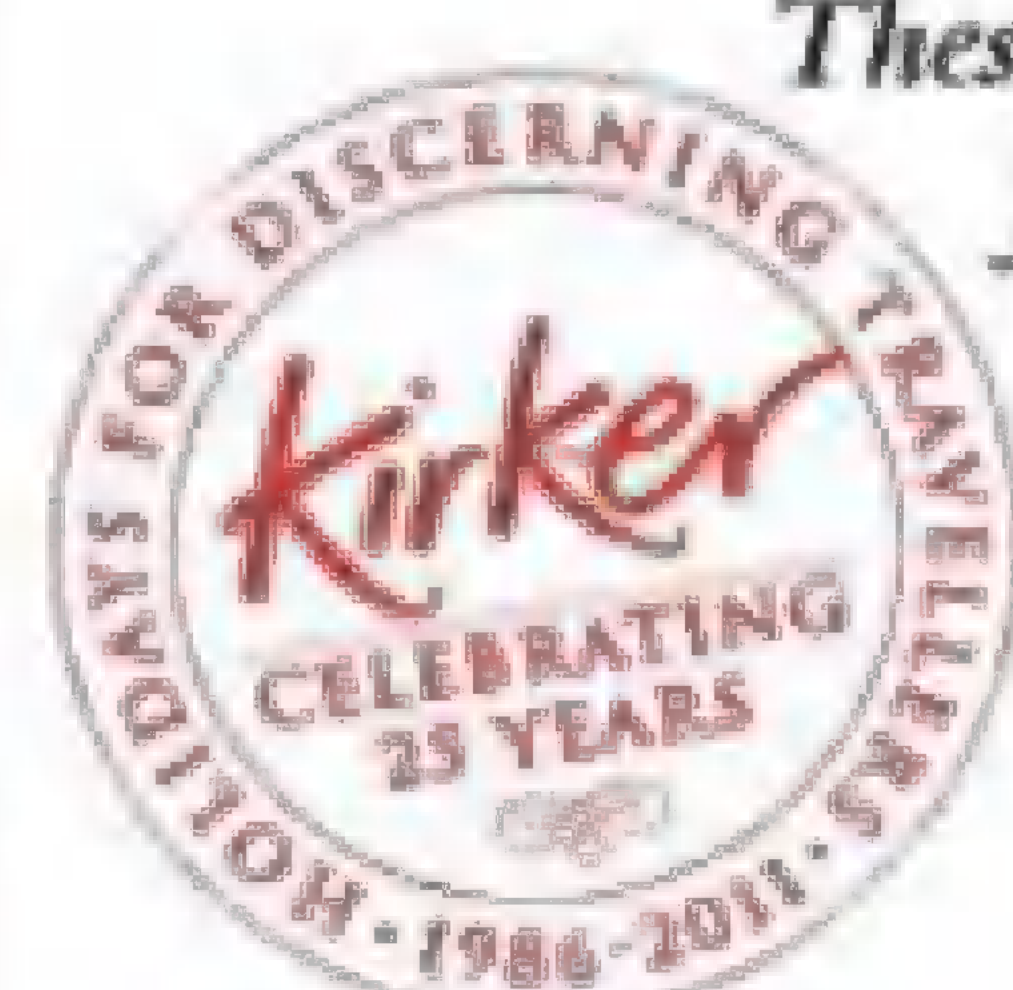
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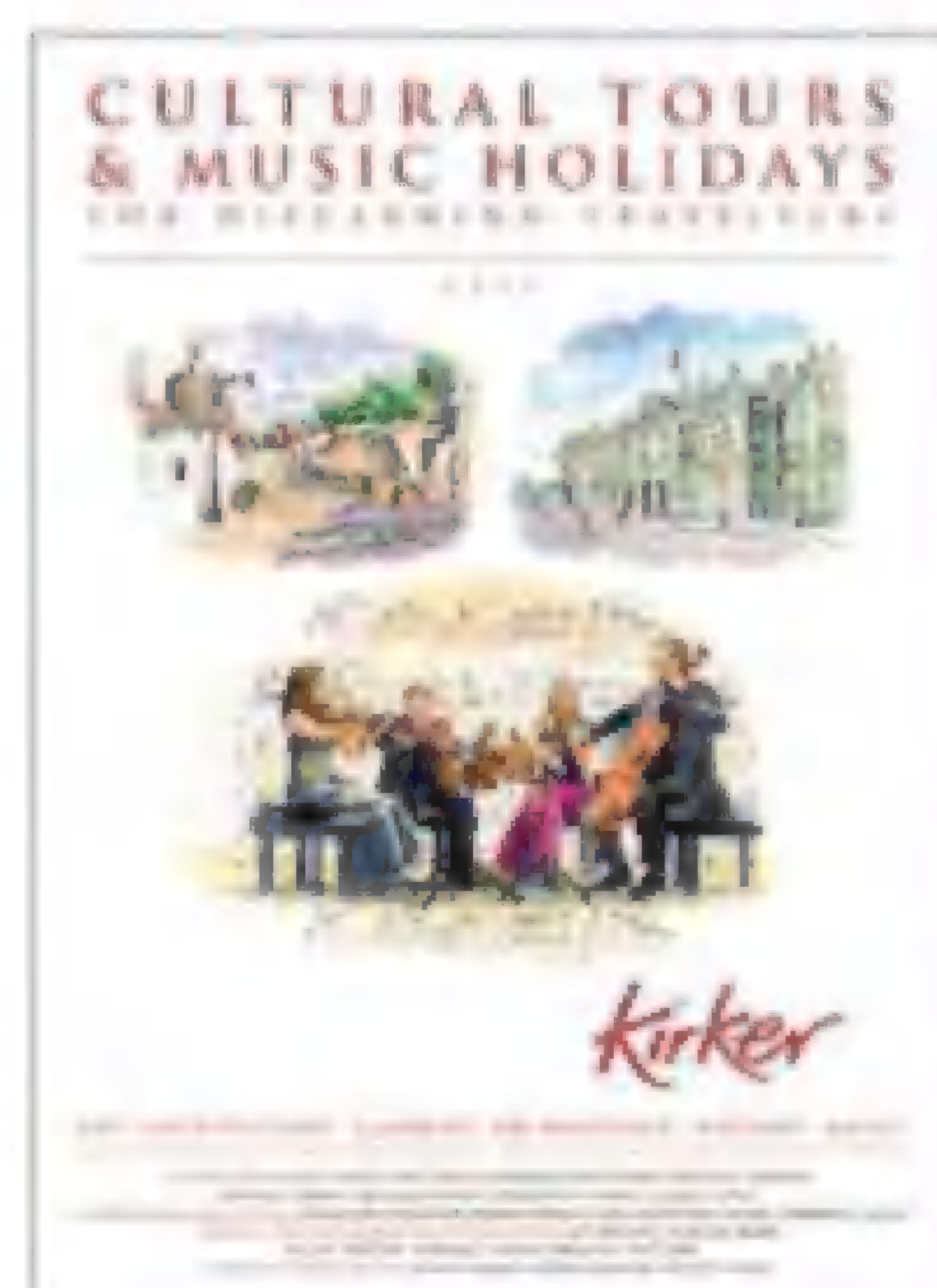
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Storemags

Dame Fiona Reynolds

The National Trust's Director General on how the piano can bring old houses to life and how she turned her organisation into an orchestra

I grew up with music. My father was quite a good amateur pianist and loved music and my mother sang. Our whole house was filled with music – my father played *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* or something similar to wake us up in the morning. We sang a lot in the car.

All my sisters at various times played instruments but I was probably the most consistent musician in the sense that I took up the violin, then the viola, and learnt it to a reasonable level. My music teacher had lots of girls scraping away at the violin and he took one look at my long arms and long fingers and said 'You can be my viola player!'

So I switched to viola. I loved it, and still do. I've always thought the viola was fantastic. It's a beautiful, beautiful instrument. Every time I hear Mozart's *Sinfonia concertante* my heart just leaps – I know it, I can still remember it. And I discovered I can still just about play because we had a reunion last year of the chamber group my teacher founded – and my fingers remembered.

Through all my teenage and university years I played music. I was never going to be a professional musician, I was never good enough for that, but it brought huge joy and friendships. After Cambridge I came to London and got a wonderful job at a tiny organisation called the Council for National Parks. I spent a lot of time visiting national parks, so took on the lifestyle I have now, which is not ever being able to do regular commitments. So I couldn't join an orchestra or choir. And I'm afraid, to my shame, I stopped playing at that point. But I never stopped loving music. Concert-going is different, having played reasonably well. You listen to music in a different way, you often know a piece inside out. In my late teens I also played in a pit orchestra for Gilbert and Sullivan, which was just such unbelievable fun. And I still can't go to the opera without the feeling of being in a pit, of being part of something.

Music was very often integral to country-house life and there's barely a great house in the country – or even a medium-sized one – that doesn't have a decent piano or harpsichord in it. There were some houses like Claydon where the Verneys were great patrons of music, where the music tradition remains very strong. Part of bringing National Trust houses to life is getting the piano played again. If you walk into a house sometimes it is a volunteer playing the piano, sometimes a visitor, but unless it is a very special piano where there's a real anxiety about it, we just try to make it as open as possible for people to play. There is nothing more wonderful than hearing a piano being played: it feels somehow integral to the spirit of the house coming alive and being used and loved. Deadly silence – shhhhhh! – is not where we are!

Two years ago there was this sudden speculation that Abbey Road was going to be for sale. And on Radio 2 Jimmy Young said 'Why doesn't the National Trust buy it?' – absolutely not prompted by us at all – and there followed a storm of people supporting the



THE MUSIC I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT...

Finzi Dies Natalis

Wilfred Brown *ten* ECO / Christopher Finzi

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This reminds me of my father and I associate it with my children, too – we played it at their christenings.

suggestion. It suddenly made us realise that people are starting to think of us in a way that is not the stereotype but as a solution for something that clearly is a national icon and has so much history and culture tied up in it. Of course in the end it wasn't for sale. But what was wonderful is that, although we didn't end up with a formal role, they were interested in the thought that Abbey Road had potentially a future both as a recording studio and as a place where people would want to come and see what happened there.

A year or so ago, while changing the organisational structure of the National Trust, we brought in a company that made us into an orchestra. This idea is that in the National Trust everyone, and every property, has a distinctive contribution to make, but together you produce something extraordinary – which is what an orchestra does. So we got together all these people who had never played an instrument before and they were given a couple of hours to play something simple. Watching people feel moved by that experience of being part of an orchestra was fantastic. I joined in – I played a trombone which I absolutely could not play! It was very special – and a nice way of bringing together my personal passion for music with my professional passion for what the National Trust does. ⑥

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